

BUBBLES OF THE DAY

A Comedy,

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY

DOUGLAS JERROLD,

AUTHOR OF "THE RENT DAY," "THE BURNING OF WAR," ETC. ETC.

PERFORMED AT

THE THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN.

LONDON:

HOW AND PARSONS, FLEET STREET.

MDCCCXII.

In New Street, Covent Garden, there is, or was a tradesman of great practical benevolence. It was the happiness of his temperament to recommend to the palates of babes and sucklings the homeliest, nay, the foulest shapes by the lusciousness of their material. The man made semblances of all things *in sugar*. Fieschi's head, bruised and bleeding from "his own petard," frowned like a demon from the shop-window: still the demon was—in *sugar*. The abomination, though appalling to the eye, would yet melt sweetly in the mouth. The thing was called a murderer; yet, taste it, and 'twas pure saccharine.

The Author of "Bubbles of the Day" confesses to the charge that in some places has been preferred against nearly every character in his comedy. He has taken for his theme the absurdities and meannesses of fools and knaves; and he has not—at least, he trusts he has not—exhibited the offenders in—*sugar*.

London, February 28, 1842.

CHARACTERS REPRESENTED.

LORD SKINDEEP, M.P.	MR. FARREN
MELON	MR. LACY.
SIR PHENIX CLEARCAKE	MR. HARLEY.
CAPTAIN SMOKE	MR. C. MATHEWS.
SPREADWEASEL	MR. BARTLEY.
BROWN, SEN.	MR. F. MATTHEWS.
CHATHAM BROWN, M.P.	MR. J. VINING.
MALMSEY SHARK	MR. MEADOWS.
WALLER	MR. HEMMING.
MIFFIN	MR. WIGAN.
KIMBO	MR. BRINDAL.
CORKS	MR. GRANBY.

PAMELA SPREADWEASEL	MRS. NISBETT.
FLORENTIA	MRS. LACY.
MRS. QUARTO	MRS. W. WEST.
GUINEA	MRS. ORGER.

SCENE, *London.* DATE, 1842.

This Comedy was represented for the first time, February 25, 1842.

BUBBLES OF THE DAY.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*A Library in the Mansion of LORD SKINDEEP.*

KIMBO discovered (reading.)

“Our currency is nothing but a system of fictitious credit, expanding and contracting with our stock of gold.” ’Tis certainly easier to get money than to know any thing about it. “Expanding and contracting with our stock of gold.”

Enter GUINEA.

GUINEA.

His lordship not yet up, Mr. Kimbo?

KIMBO.

No. The house did not adjourn till three.

GUINEA.

Poor gentleman! That parliament must kill him with fatigue.

KIMBO.

By no means; for he always takes his first rest before he comes away. Habit’s every thing: his lordship sleeps sounder in parliament than in his own bed.

GUINEA.

But what have you there, Mr. Kimbo; not a novel?

KIMBO.

A novel ! Guinea. A novel, and consols in their present state ! No, my thoughts——

GUINEA.

Yes, your thoughts are like the omnibuses ; there's hardly one of 'em that doesn't go to the Bank.

KIMBO.

And that's why my thoughts and yours so often run together. (*Aside.*) I know she dabbles : if I could be sure of her securities, I'd risk an offer.

GUINEA.

La, what's a lone woman to do with money—even if she had it ?

KIMBO.

Why, take a prudent partner, and so divide the responsibility. Eh, Guinea ?

GUINEA.

(*Aside.*) He's in the railways, I know : if I could only be certain that his shares had gone up !

KIMBO.

Now, with such a wife, in the soft, feathery ties of wedlock——

GUINEA.

Talking of ties, what's your opinion of Timbuctoo bonds ?

KIMBO.

You hav'n't touch'd 'em ?

GUINEA.

No.

KIMBO.

(*Aside.*) Then I'll go on with my love. My angel, don't lay your snowy finger on 'em. Captain Smoke says—

GUINEA.

Captain Smoke ! Ha, he is a clever man !

KIMBO.

Clever! He's a pyramid of talent. Well, Captain Smoke says—hush! here's Corks.

Enter CORKS.

GUINEA.

Bless me, Mr. Corks! any thing happened? Your face is as mottled as——

CORKS.

Mottled, ma'am! There's enough to mottle Gog and Magog. (*To KIMBO.*) Have you seen the debate of last night?

KIMBO.

No; but I hear that Lord Skindeep, our excellent master, made a speech.

CORKS.

A speech! A scream, you mean. He knows no more of politics than a monkey knows of a steam-engine.

GUINEA.

And what of it? Although you're his butler, why should you take his ignorance so much to heart?

CORKS.

Why? Hav'n't I a little freehold in my native town, and didn't I vote for him? I feel myself compromised. He never opens his mouth that I don't perspire for the borough.

KIMBO.

I suppose they laughed at him last night, as usual;—poor devil!

CORKS.

Laughed! If it was only known when he'd speak, he'd empty the playhouses. That a man who would have been so capital in a pantomime should ever have been sent to parliament! And yet to this man I gave my valuable vote! Mind, I say,—gave it.

GUINEA.

Then I don't wonder at your being vexed; for when one

does give a valuable thing one naturally expects something for it.

KIMBO.

I suppose, poor wretch ! they'll skewer him in the weekly papers again ?

CORKS.

I hope so. (*Aside.*) He shall have it in one ; I'll give it him as I've given it him before, or my name's not " Brutus the Elder."

GUINEA.

I hope so too ; 'tis so delightful to read abuse of one's master. Now there's " The Sunday Rattlesnake:" I couldn't get through Sundays without it. 'Tis so delicious to see great people picked to pieces, and made nobodies of ! It brings 'em down so to one's self you know.

CORKS.

When you're not an elector. But to have one's representative continually roasted—it's like being burnt in effigy.

KIMBO.

And his lordship's speech is devilish foolish, is it ?

CORKS.

I blush for the town of Muffborough—the speech is contemptible. Here, Guinea, put this book on the third shelf, there to the right. I smuggled it away on Friday (*Aside*), for my last letter of " Brutus the Elder."

GUINEA.

By the bye, Mr. Corks, did Mr. Chatham Brown speak last night ?

CORKS.

He's not reported. 'Twas enough for our master to make a fool of himself.

KIMBO.

No doubt.

CORKS.

They've flayed him alive, though. Oh ! ha ! ha !—given him such a scourging. (*Takes newspapers from his pocket.*)

KIMBO.

Is it very cruel? Pray read it.

CORKS.

No—no; here's the papers—there's the speech. (*Gives a newspaper to each.*) Read for yourselves. And yet, here is a little bit of abuse in the leader, that does one's heart good.

GUINEA.

Abuse of his lordship! Oh! read—read!

CORKS.

A staring likeness of him. Listen. (*Reads.*) “As for the member for Muffborough, he is one of those wise philanthropists who, in a time of famine, would vote for nothing but a supply of toothpicks!”

KIMBO.

The very man.

CORKS.

(*Reads.*) “He ventures on a state benevolence as a timid spinster ventures on sea-bathing. He stands shivering on the brink of good intentions; dabbles, splashes a little; and, making noise enough to bring all the world about him, never has the heart to plunge right in.”

GUINEA.

Beautiful bitters!

CORKS.

(*Reads.*) “In a word, Lord Skindeep may be called the Punch of Parliament!”

ALL.

Ha! ha! ha! The Punch of Parliament!—the Punch of—

Enter LORD SKINDEEP, down the stage. GUINEA and CORKS drop papers, and run off.

SKINDEEP.

The Punch of Parliament! Now, although I know every member of the house, who can those menials mean? Kimbo, is my library turned to a debating-room? Ha!

the morning papers! (*Aside.*) I stand in the midst of 'em like a conjuror in a circle of snakes. (*KIMBO picks up the papers and presents them.*) Go. I can see by the scoundrel's look of satisfaction, that somebody has abused me. [*Exit KIMBO.*]

Enter CHATHAM BROWN, followed by BROWN, sen., who has a newspaper.

BROWN.

Never tell me, sir!—never tell me! Pardon me, my lord, for this abrupt descent upon you; but——

CHATHAM.

Sir, if you will only listen——

BROWN.

Again I ask you, where were you on Thursday? There's the division, sir—the printed list! Now find me the name you're making worthless, sir—the name of Chatham Brown!

CHATHAM.

The truth is, sir, I was—shut out.

BROWN.

Shut out! And do you think, sir, when your friends get in, they'll remember those who were always shut out? You were not in the house the whole night, sir!

SKINDEEP.

Upon my honour, yes; for I woke him three times myself. My dear Brown, be indulgent.

BROWN.

My lord, you know from his christening upwards, I've dreamt of nothing but getting him into parliament. The oxen I've roasted for that young man—the ale that has flowed—the blankets given at Christmas—the handsome organ to the church of Muffborough; and all these for nothing—all to be continually shut out!

CHATHAM.

My dear father, why persist in trying to make me a politician?

BROWN.

As the world runs, what else remains? Zounds, sir! discover another continent—make out the North-west Passage—find a specific for the plague—the philosopher's stone—and the fountain of youth—write an Iliad, and build a St. Peter's; and when you've done your work, the world shall ask you, who are you?

CHATHAM.

My dear sir—

BROWN.

Sir, there is, but one path to substantial greatness—the path of statesmanship. For, though you set out in a threadbare coat, and a hole in either shoe, if you walk with a cautious eye to the sides, you'll one day find yourself in velvet and gold, with music in your name and money in your pocket.

SKINDEEP.

This is Chatham's first session. He'll come on by and by,—Cicero had his beginnings.

BROWN.

On Thursday, if he were in the house, why didn't he speak?

CHATHAM.

Because I was totally ignorant of the question.

BROWN.

And what of that, sir? Ignorant! The great art of life is to pass off our ignorance with such a confident grace, that people shall take the counterfeit for the true thing.

SKINDEEP.

I have had personal experience of the beauty of that truth. Now, there's Captain Smoke; he says young politicians are like parrots—they learn to speak best in the dark.

BROWN.

No doubt of it. 'Sdeath, sir! if you have no regard for me, have some for the memory of your poor mother; and, right or wrong, talk on every occasion.

CHATHAM.

In time, sir, I hope to prove a most filial senator.

BROWN.

Well, you promise to speak on this grand question—the tax on umbrellas?

CHATHAM.

I promise—I'll try something.

BROWN.

And a long speech—a long speech! If I could but once see you reeled out into five columns, I should die happy.

Enter FOOTMAN.

FOOTMAN.

Sir Phenix Clearcake.

SKINDEEP.

Admit him. (*Exit Footman*). Now, Chatham, if you want a model for your eloquence, Clearcake's the man.

BROWN.

Has he so fine a gift?

SKINDEEP.

He's stuffed with the sublime and beautiful. You'd think he'd been bit by a poet's mad dog. The truth is, he huddled together a stock of fine phrases as a matter of trade, and some of the stock still remains on hand.

BROWN.

Trade, my lord—trade?

SKINDEEP.

Yes: by knocking down the estates of others, he has obtained a tolerable one for himself. Late auctioneer, now knight and alderman.

Enter SIR PHENIX CLEARCAKE.

SIR PHENIX.

My dear lord, I cannot restrain a feeling that propels me

into a belief that you're in roseate health; for you look a nature's illustration of the best Vandyke.

SKINDEEP.

Thank you, Sir Phenix, I am alive. Sir Phenix, Mr. Brown—Mr. Chatham Brown, my new colleague for Muffborough.

SIR PHENIX.

(To CHATHAM). Sir, permit me to congratulate you on your consistency—I mean, on your constituency. I know Muffborough well, sir. Flourishing place, sir! There, every landlord has a happy and contented tenantry, and the word arrear is not to be found in their vocabulary.

CHATHAM.

Why, Sir Phenix, we have not the most to complain of.

SIR PHENIX.

You of course reside in Elysium House? No! That's odd; for all the world used to point out that house as inevitably the future residence of one of the members for the borough. A magnificent mansion! If I recollect right, it has windows of plate-glass—hot and cold baths—with every essential to happiness.

CHATHAM.

Possibly; I know nothing of its hospitalities.

SIR PHENIX.

But the scenery, sir! The more than fairy-ground of that more than earthly paradise! The river which good-naturedly encircles the park—the Druid wood, when the setting sun condescendingly makes orient all the leaves—the ruins of the distant castle in a perfect state of repair—the cataracts, with their terrific thunder, softened to the nerves of the most timid lady—while the golden moon, which in that favoured region is nearly always at the full——

CHATHAM.

Spare me, Sir Phenix. You really make me feel unworthy to represent——

SIR PHENIX.

Not at all, sir. Though such voters of such a borough might have sent Apollo to parliament.

CHATHAM.

And I have no doubt would—(*aside*), if Apollo, instead of piping to his sheep, had killed his mutton for 'em.

SIR PHENIX.

My lord, I come with a petition to you—a petition not parliamentary, but charitable. We propose, my lord, a fancy fair in Guildhall: its object so benevolent, and more than that, so respectable!

SKINDEEP.

Benevolence and respectability! of course, I'm with you. Well,—the precise object?

SIR PHENIX.

It is to remove a stain—a very great stain from the city; to give an air of maiden beauty to a most venerable institution; to exercise a renovating taste at a most inconsiderable outlay; to call up as it were the snowy purity of Greece in the coal-smoke atmosphere of London; in a word, my lord—but as yet 'tis a profound secret—it is to paint St. Paul's!

CHATHAM.

Paint St. Paul's!

SIR PHENIX.

To give it a virgin outside—to make it so truly respectable!

SKINDEEP.

A gigantic effort!

PHENIX.

The fancy fair will be on a most comprehensive and philanthropic scale. Every alderman takes a stall;—and, to give you an idea of the enthusiasm in the city—but this is also a secret—the Lady Mayoress has been up three nights making pincushions.

SKINDEEP.

But you don't want me to take a stall—to sell pin-cushions?

SIR PHENIX.

Certainly not, my lord. And yet your philanthropic speeches in the house, my Lord, convince me that to obtain a certain good you would sell any thing.

SKINDEEP.

Well, well; command me in any way; benevolence is my foible. I tell you what; I've some splendid Chinese paintings on rice-paper. They're not of the least use to me, so you may have them for the charity.

SIR PHENIX.

Ha, Lord Skindeep! that's so like yourself! And if you would only enrich them with your autograph——

SKINDEEP.

Of course; any thing I can do for my fellow-creatures, any thing—dear me, I quite forgot; I promised those very pictures to Lady Hum, for her album: so you can't have 'em. But any thing I can do for my species——

SIR PHENIX.

Your lordship has influence with your gifted relative.

SKINDEEP.

What, Mrs. Quarto? Nay, as you are so shortly to marry her niece—by the bye, I believe you dine with us to-day?

SIR PHENIX.

I have that promised felicity. But Mrs. Quarto, if you would only induce her to preside at a stall, and sell her own stupendous volumes. That's my petition.

SKINDEEP.

I don't think the lady understands the commercial principles of a fancy fair.

SIR PHENIX.

There is nothing so easy. It is simply this,—to ask six times the worth of an article, and never to give change.

Enter Footman.

FOOTMAN.

Captain Smoke.

SKINDEEP.

Very well. (*Exit Footman.*) I've promised to make you known to the captain. He is a devilish clever fellow.

SIR PHENIX.

So speculative, so prosperous in all he does; in short, so very respectable.

Enter CAPTAIN SMOKE.

SMOKE.

To find you so early stirring, my lord, is past my hopes. After the oration of last night, too! Why, there are certain friends of mine, who having delivered such a speech, would have had the knocker tied up, and straw in the road for a fortnight.

SKINDEEP.

These are not times for such men. Allow me, Captain Smoke, to introduce my friends and guests; Mr. Brown—Mr. Chatham Brown, now my fellow-labourer for Muffborough. Swopley, you remember, accepted the Chiltern Hundreds.

SMOKE.

Aye, there was a talk of his accepting some hundreds, but I forget the whole of the story. Sir, I congratulate you. In these days of intellectual enterprise, yours is, indeed, a glorious vocation! (*Aside.*) I'll fix him to take the chair at our meeting—get his name as a director. It is with you, sir, as only the six hundred and fifty-eighth part of the delegated wisdom of the empire, to—

CHATHAM.

Really, captain—

SMOKE.

Captain no longer, sir. I have quitted the service, and turned my thoughts to commerce and the improvement of mankind.

SKINDEEP.

The captain was in a foreign force.

SMOKE.

The Madagascar Fusileers. Myself and three brothers. Ha! poor Hannibal! Excuse this tear to his memory. All of us in that war, like hospital doctors, bled gratis. But our family was always military—always distinguished. Look through all the last campaigns, and in the thickest of the fight you'll be sure to find a Smoke.

CHATHAM.

(*Aside.*) This fellow's as transparent as a lantern.

SMOKE.

Now I've cut up my sword into steel pens, and flourish the weapons in the cause of commerce. We are about to start a company to take on lease Mount Vesuvius for the manufactory of lucifer-matches.

SIR PHENIX.

A stupendous speculation! I should say, that when its countless advantages are duly numbered, it will be found a certain wheel of fortune to the enlightened capitalist.

SMOKE.

Now, sir, if you would but take the chair at the first meeting—(*Aside to CHATHAM*)—we shall make it all right about the shares;—if you would but speak for two or three hours on the social improvement conferred by the lucifer-match, with the monopoly of sulphur secured to the company—a monopoly which will suffer no man, woman, or child to strike a light without our permission—

BROWN.

He'll do it, of course he'll do it.

CHATHAM.

Truly, sir, in such a cause, to such an auditory—I fear my eloquence.

SMOKE.

Sir, if you would speak well any where, there's nothing like first grinding your eloquence on a mixed meeting. Depend on't, if you can only manage a little humbug with a mob, it gives you great confidence for another place.

SKINDEEP.

Smoke, never say humbug ; it's coarse.

SIR PHENIX.

And not respectable.

SMOKE.

Pardon me, my lord ; it *was* coarse. But the fact is, humbug has received such high patronage, that now it's quite classic.

CHATHAM.

But why not embark his lordship in the lucifer question?

SMOKE.

I can't : I have his lordship in three companies already. Three. First there's a company—half a million capital—for extracting civet from assafoetida. The second is a company for a trip all round the world. We propose to hire a three-decker of the Lords of the Admiralty, and fit her up with every accommodation for families. We've already advertised for wet nurses and maids of all-work.

SIR PHENIX.

A magnificent project ! And then the fittings-up will be so respectable. A delightful billiard-table in the ward-room ; with, for the humbler classes, skittles on the orlop-deck. Swings and archery for the ladies, trap-ball and cricket for the children, whilst the marine sportsman will find the stock of gulls unlimited. Weippert's quadrille band is engaged, and——

SMOKE.

For the convenience of lovers, the ship will carry a parson.

CHATHAM.

And the object ?

SMOKE.

Pleasure and education. At every new country we shall drop anchor for at least a week, that the children may go to school and learn the language. The trip must answer ; 'twill occupy only three years, and we've forgotten nothing to make it delightful—nothing, from hot rolls to cork jackets.

BROWN.

And now, sir, the third venture?

SMOKE.

That, sir, is a company to buy the Serpentine River for a Grand Junction Temperance Cemetery.

BROWN.

What! so many watery graves?

SMOKE.

Yes, sir, with floating tombstones. Here's the prospectus. Look here; surmounted by a hyacinth—the very emblem of temperance—a hyacinth flowering in the limpid flood. Now, if you don't feel equal to the lucifers—I know his lordship's goodness,—he'll give you up the cemetery. (*Aside to CHATHAM.*) A family vault as a bonus to the chairman.

SIR PHENIX.

What a beautiful subject for a speech! Water-lilies and aquatic plants gemming the translucent crystal—shells of rainbow brightness—a constant supply of gold and silver fish, with the right of angling secured to shareholders. The extent of the river being necessarily limited, will render lying there so select, so very respectable.

CHATHAM.

I would not rob his lordship of so captivating a theme. And luckily, Sir Phenix, (*aside*) and luckily for myself, here comes Mrs. Quarto.

SMOKE.

An extraordinary woman! Have you read her last book, sir?

SKINDEEP.

(*Aside.*) I should like to read her last book with all my soul.

SMOKE.

She's a travelling college, and civilizes wherever she goes. Send her among the Hottentots, and in a week she'd write 'em into top-boots. She spent only three days with the

Esquimaux Indians; wrote a book upon their manners; and, by the very force of her satire, shamed 'em out of whale-oil into soda-water.

Enter the HON. MRS. QUARTO.

MRS. QUARTO.

Good morning, Chatham. Ha! Sir Phenix, stands Temple-bar where it did? and have you brought me Whittington's autograph, as you promised? Captain Smoke, does commerce flourish? and—ha! ha!—do you still raise as many companies as when you were in the army? Oh, my lord! your oration of last night was delicious! I hav'n't laughed so much since the new tragedy.

SKINDEEP.

And yet the subject, madam, scarcely verged upon the humorous. Though I blush to say it, there were two or three who tittered.

MRS. QUARTO.

Tittered! hav'n't you seen the papers? The reporters say—roars of laughter.

SKINDEEP.

The reporters, madam, have long ears. I heard nothing of the sort. But I am a fool, madam, to have a heart in my bosom. This is not an age of sympathy but of selfishness,—an age of tadpole philosophers, who consider their fellow-man as no more than an eight-day clock.

MRS. QUARTO.

An instrument made to work, but not to feel—to be wound up and set going for the convenience of the purchaser. The sentiment, you will remember, is in my work, "Politics of the Patagonians."

SKINDEEP.

Upon my life, I didn't recollect it. But if the book has hung on hand, Sir Phenix has a scheme by which you may scatter it.

SIR PHENIX.

A fancy fair in Guildhall—so very respectable. Lady

Amazon will sell proof impressions of her own portrait. Now, if you would but preside at a stand, where your golden volumes——

MRS. QUARTO.

Impossible! I hav'n't a minute that hasn't twenty different claimants. First, there's my article, "Conic Sections," for the new encyclopædia; then there's my two novels in numbers, "The Ambitious Footman," and "The Filial Climbing Boy;" next, my "Turkey and the Turks;" then a new tragedy, and an "Essay on Backgammon;" then my splendid annual, "The Book of Blushes."

SKINDEEP.

(*Aside.*) With portraits of the criminals; ladies in sugar, with cobweb wardrobes.

MRS. QUARTO.

And finally, my "History of Mount Strombolo," and my new set of songs, "The Lays of the Lancers!"

BROWN.

And employed upon 'em all at once? Why, madam, to write in this fashion, you ought to be a Briareus, with a goosequill in each of your hundred hands.

SIR PHENIX.

And if you were, would madam, that I could be an Argus, with a hundred eyes to read the hundred things you wrote!

MRS. QUARTO.

(*Aside.*) For an alderman, that's really not so bad. Well, Sir Phenix, if I can spare an hour, and you assure me the object is charitable——

SIR PHENIX.

The object, madam, is charity, taste, and above all—respectability.

SMOKE.

And now, madam, follows my petition. You'll take this trip with us round the world? At all events, you'll not refuse your name. (*Aside to her.*) If it ever come to any thing, you can be taken dangerously ill, and go ashore at

Portsmouth—your name alone will fill the ship. And then the benefit to literature! You can write the history of every country—for we shall stop at least six days—on the spot. What a gift to the world of letters! Already I see, in starry type—"Ahaite and the Otaheitans!"

MRS. QUARTO.

The world's ungrateful, captain; I shall travel no more. There, don't speak. The world's an old wicked world, and not worth the mending. (*Turns up the stage.*)

SIR PHENIX.

(*Aside.*) Lady Amazon and Mrs. Quarto! If we had but a countess! Madam, I take my leave with a load of gratitude.

MRS. QUARTO.

Sir Phenix, you'll find Florentia in the drawing-room.

SIR PHENIX.

I fly there. (*Aside.*) If I can but catch a countess, St. Paul's is made! [*Exit.*]

SKINDEEP (*about to follow him.*)

Sir Phenix—Sir Phenix!

SMOKE.

(*Aside to SKINDEEP.*) We meet on the civet to-morrow, at two. We want from you a short, flowery speech, full of hope.

SKINDEEP.

And my shares?

SMOKE.

As I said, are snug.

SKINDEEP.

Because, if ever the shares go up, 'twill be all the better for the charity I intend to give them to. [*Exit.*]

SMOKE.

Madam, in the hope that you'll relent, and bring the world once more at your feet, I depart.

BROWN.

Captain Smoke, a word. (*Aside.*) Chatham shall be

chairman of one of these things, I'm determined. If you will allow me one of your valuable minutes——

SMOKE.

Sir, you shall have any number—(aside)—in the hope that I may make 'em valuable. [Exit with BROWN.

MRS. QUARTO.

Well, Chatham; seriously, how do you like parliament?

CHATHAM.

(Yawning.) Wonderfully well—past my hopes.

MRS. QUARTO.

The excitement of your election must have been delightful?

CHATHAM.

'Twas a hard contest. As sportsmen say, quite neck and neck.

MRS. QUARTO.

As scandal says, quite pocket and pocket. But the canvass must have had its charms?

CHATHAM.

Madam!

MRS. QUARTO.

The exhibition of character: the sturdy patriotism of some—the timid support of others;—the hearty welcome, and the gruff denial;—the insolence of the party foe—and the worse familiarity of the party friend! Ha! ha! I'm told you shook hands with all the butchers—called their wives angels, and kissed their darling babes for cherubs!

CHATHAM.

Yes, madam, I have had my trials.

MRS. QUARTO.

And let us hope the reward will come; for instance, the support at Cowslip Lodge.

CHATHAM.

Cowslip Lodge!

MRS. QUARTO.

Where a certain young lady—a visitor—a sylph, beautiful as day——

CHATHAM.

Oh, madam! you know her—can tell me whither she is fled?

MRS. QUARTO.

All I know is, that when the constituents, drawn up before the Dolphin, awaited a grateful speech from the man of their choice, he, their absent member, like knight of old——

“ Was seeking over hill and dale,
A lady bright and fair.”

Ha! ha! ha!

CHATHAM.

You will—you must, reveal her hiding-place! At the first glance, I felt she was my fate—my destiny! Oh! madam, I can't talk—can't feel like a man of this dull world, when I think of her.

MRS. QUARTO.

Then, as I'm no company for superhuman natures, I'll begone. Poor fellow! Begs for a vote, and finds a mistress! Ha! ha! ha!

CHATHAM.

Find her! Where, madam? Where?

MRS. QUARTO.

Where? Ha! ha! ha! “ And echo answers *where?*”
Ha! ha! ha!

CHATHAM.

Madam—madam! I will not quit you till——

MRS. QUARTO.

No? then follow me, if you dare; for I am going to my lawyer. [*Exit Mrs. QUARTO, CHATHAM following her.*]

ACT II.

SCENE.—*Melon's Chambers, Inner Temple.*

MELON *discovered, writing*; MIFFIN *in attendance.*
Knocking at door.

MELON.

Miffin, I'm still out of town.

[Exit MIFFIN at chamber door.]

VOICE *without.*

Mr. Melon within?

MIFFIN, *without.*

Gone to Guernsey.

VOICE *without.*

This is the tenth time I've called for my bill. I shall not call again.

MELON.

Benevolent creature! Would all my creditors had his humanity!

Re-enter MIFFIN.

MIFFIN.

That's Simpkins, sir; the mealy-mouthed Simpkins. Certainly the best way to make a man speak out is to get into his debt.

MELON.

Take this letter to Malmsey Shark, and—what's the matter?

MIFFIN.

Malmsey Shark again! Oh, sir! he's a hyena that laughs with men and then picks their bones.

MELON.

Malmsey Shark is a money-lender, a wine-merchant, and a vendor of coals. Know you any thing worse of the poor man?

MIFFIN.

I know this: I wish he'd nothing to drink but his own port; and in the hardest frost, nothing to warm him but his own wall's-end. Don't send the letter, sir.

MELON.

What remains for me, when my means are not equal to a gentleman?

MIFFIN.

This remains, sir,—make the gentleman equal to the means.

MELON.

Money I must have! Another year and I shall be free—discharged from the tribe of sharks.

MIFFIN.

Yes; as my grandfather was discharged from the army,—to go upon crutches for the rest of your life. Only another year, and so study out the time, sir. Stay at home, study the law, and live on sandwiches. Only a year, sir!

MELON.

And then, Miffin, my own master; with my own fortune——

MIFFIN.

And your own wife; for without Miss Spreadweasel you get no fortune.

MELON.

And thus money is to bribe me to a nauseous marriage; as they give children sweetmeats to make 'em swallow rhubarb.

MIFFIN.

Rhubarb! Well, to me the young lady has the face of an angel.

MELON.

But her mind, Miffin, her mind! Ugh, a female miser! To me she's like a child's money-box—very pretty outside, but within, a miserable hoard of miserable savings. Marry such a woman! For the rest of my life I should have no richer hopes than water-gruel suppers and one blanket.

MIFFIN.

But this Malmsey Shark—this merry man-eater ; don't deal with him, sir. Only look, now——

MELON.

Only look. (*Showing empty purs.*) Had you the words of Solomon, the hollow voice of this would prevail against you. No other syllable, but go ! I am dead till you return : for in this world purses are the arteries of life ; as they are full or empty, we are men or carcases. Go !

MIFFIN.

I'll go, sir. (*Aside.*) I see the end : the money-lender will eat him to his skeleton, and then carefully lock it up.

MELON (*approaching book shelves*).

Study—study the law ! How invitingly yon row of sages smile upon me ! With what a dulcet note doth wisdom, clad in sober calf, invoke me to her banquet and her shows ! There may he who feeds grow great on dead men's brains ; there may he trace a web of hubbub words which craft may turn into a net of steel. There learn, when justice weighs poor bleeding truth, to make her mount by flaw and doubt, and see recorded, aye, ten thousand times, how quibble, with his varnished cheek, hath laughed defrauded justice out of court ! Study the law—study—(*Knocking at door.*) Another creditor ! My heart falls at the knocker. (*Knocking.*) No, 'tis surely Shark. (*Opens door.*)

Enter SMOKE.

SMOKE.

I have the honour to address Mr. Melon ?

MELON.

Sir, I—I——

SMOKE.

(*Aside.*) The man who stammers at his name's in debt ; a certain symptom. Don't be alarmed, sir ; I am the friend of your friend, Malmsey Shark.

MELON.

Alarmed ! I hope, sir, I—(*Knocking at door.*) Who the devil's that ? (*Aside.*)

SMOKE.

Knockers, sir—knockers are a damned invention. I can sympathize with any man who suffers from 'em.

MELON.

Here, sir, your sympathy is as unexpected as it is unrequited.

SMOKE.

They play the devil with the nerves. Sometimes bring on a confinement that lasts for many months. The best thing to fight the disease with is, early—very early exercise out of doors. (*Knocking repeated.*) And then the variety of knocks! (*Knocking repeated very violently.*) That's Malmsey Shark.

MELON.

How do you know?

SMOKE.

From this fact: no metal ever falls into his hands that he doesn't make the most of it.

MELON *opens door.* Enter MALMSEY SHARK.

SHARK.

Mr. Melon, ha! ha! What, Captain Smoke too! Well, ha! ha!—my dear heart! ha! ha!—I didn't know you were friends.

SMOKE.

The truth is, Shark, I called at your laboratory, and finding that you were come hither, followed you: for which freedom, business will, I hope, be my apology to Mr. Melon.

SHARK.

Gentlemen, any way—ha! ha!—I'm happy you have met. (*Aside to MELON.*) Make him your bosom friend, 'twill be money in your pocket. (*Aside to SMOKE.*) He's a wonderful young barrister; he's safe at last to sit upon the woolsack.

SMOKE.

(*Half aside to SHARK.*) I'm glad he's safe at last to sit somewhere; for if he's long in your hands, he'll not long have a leg to stand upon.

SHARK.

Ha! ha! you didn't hear the captain? Never mind; ha! ha! he's such a man for jokes; but then there's no malice in 'em—ha! ha!—none. I call his jokes glow-worms; ha! ha! they shine so, and never scorch—ha! ha!

MELON.

The true benevolence of wit.

SMOKE.

Oh, sir! our friend has so sweet a nature! who could have the heart to blister him? So good in all things! his very wine is medicine.

MELON.

(*Aside.*) A patent medicine; for he parts with it only by virtue of a stamp.

SHARK.

Talking of wine—ha! ha!—this is a secret: I have six cases of such exquisite burgundy!

SMOKE.

The secret's quite safe—nobody will believe it.

MELON.

Six cases! I'll have 'em—not another word—I'll have 'em. (*Aside to SHARK.*) I understand; the old terms.

SHARK.

As for money, ha! ha! that's the last thing I think of.

SMOKE.

And will be the last, no doubt. The best fellow in the world, sir, to get money of; for as he sends you half cash, half wine, why, if you can't take up his bill, you've always poison at hand for a remedy.

SHARK.

Ha! ha! any body else would offend me. Some people's jokes are like thistles; but the captain's put one in a glow; ha! ha! good as a flesh-brush—ha! ha! But good morning; I couldn't pass the door, though I'd nothing to say.

(*Aside to MELON.*) You'll have the burgundy? I'm at home at four.

MELON.

(*Aside to SHARK.*) At four then?—(*knocking at door.*) Diogenes was a happy fellow; his house had no knocker.

SMOKE.

(*Aside to MELON.*) Will you pardon me? I know what it is to be disturbed this way in one's studies by monotonous folks, who only come to call out what they've called a hundred times before. In brief, sir, if you're not in town, I'll say as much—and swear to it—with pleasure.

MELON.

Nay, sir, the truth is, I rather expect a near and dear friend of mine, Mr Spreadweasel.

SHARK.

(*Aside.*) Spreadweasel! If he sees me here, there's an end to our dealings. Captain, I have a word to say in the next room.

SMOKE.

(*Going, returns, to MELON.*) If it should not be Spreadweasel, remember, I'll find a housekeeper.

[*Exit with SHARK into inner room.*]

MELON.

A most unceremonious, yet most timely friend! (*Knocking. Opens door.*)

Enter MRS. QUARTO and CHATHAM BROWN.

Madam! (*Aside.*) My widow plague again.

MRS. QUARTO.

I hope I mar no consultation; but 'tis the privilege of my sex to teaze.

MELON.

A privilege Mrs. Quarto can never exercise.

MRS. QUARTO.

I have a friend to introduce,—Mr. Chatham Brown.

CHATHAM.

(*Recognizing him.*) What! Harry Melon!

MELON.

Fellow-student! The wildest—the merriest of Oxonians! For which of your virtues—for what capacity, for I see the deed is done, have they turned you into member of parliament?

CHATHAM.

I suppose, my capacity for late hours; for truly, I know no other.

MRS. QUARTO.

Mr. Brown's obligations to your support in the late contest, demand his special thanks.

MELON.

My support! Madam, I'm a poor barrister, with no voice.

MRS. QUARTO.

Nay, but our friend would acknowledge the solicitude of those, with many tender ties upon you.

MELON.

They must be very tender, for I don't feel 'em.

MRS. QUARTO.

Oh! the friends at Cowslip Lodge—the fair and beautiful advocates of the purity of election!

CHATHAM.

My dear Melon, you are free—your heart is untouched?

MELON.

To be sure it is.

MRS. QUARTO.

(*Aside.*) Hypocrite! Is it so?

MELON.

I stay at home, and study the gravities of life. Here I sit, waiting for briefs, anxious as a spider in his first web.

Ha! ha! you're in love: take my advice—as you're in parliament, go upon committees, and forget it.

CHATHAM.

The lady visitor at Cowslip Lodge—you know her?

MELON.

Not I: did she wear your colours, and with her cherry lips steal plumpers from the enemy?

MRS. QUARTO.

She was the very soul of the contest. They say she wrote election madrigals and party epigrams. Then such eloquence! The very attorney of the borough, whose boast it was that he was born a blue, with a look and a laugh, she turned into a yellow.

MELON.

Yellow? ha! with his profession 'tis a seductive colour. And pray who is this Circe?

CHATHAM.

That, since the lady here is obdurate, I must know of you: speak but two words—her name, and her abiding-place.

MRS. QUARTO.

Aye; he knows, and will divulge.

MELON.

(*Aside to CHATHAM.*) My dear fellow, beware of that widow. For myself, I sometimes tremble to think I'm a bachelor.

CHATHAM.

But this girl—this sprite of loveliness and mystery?

MELON.

Well, sketch me the beauties of your unknown fair, and if I can complete the picture, tell me if 'tis like. Begin,—her eyes?

CHATHAM.

Bright as sapphires!

MELON.

Granted. As bright and as passionless: an eye without a soul.

CHATHAM.

Oh! who can paint their depth—their joy—their sudden gladness—and their instant thought?

MELON.

Then 'tis not she. Proceed;—her lips?

CHATHAM.

The mouth of Hebe!

MELON.

A mouth promising nectar?

CHATHAM.

Aye!

MELON.

Yet talking poor small beer.

CHATHAM.

A flood of richest thoughts—of happiest fancies, poured from the heart, and vocal with its truth. Then her laugh!

MELON.

What! does she laugh?

CHATHAM.

The magic of her laugh would charm a hermit from his cell—a miser from his heaps!

MELON.

That's enough; my lady never laughs. Her wildest mirth's a smile, and that seems no part of her, but lies upon her cheek like moonlight on a statue.

MRS. QUARTO.

You hear, Chatham, he would turn his Helen to a housemaid, to secure her from another Paris.

MELON.

'Tis true I am bound to the lady—bound by wicked

parchment. Yet, if you can, marry her—marry, and be frost-bit for life.

MIFFIN *runs in*.

MIFFIN.

Sir—sir, Mr. Spreadweasel!

MRS. QUARTO.

(*Aside.*) Most happy chance!

MIFFIN.

He didn't see me; but I know he's coming here, so ran before to give you word.

MRS. QUARTO.

(*Aside to CHATHAM.*) 'Tis the lady's father.

CHATHAM.

(*Aside to her.*) Her father! What! can her name be Spreadweasel?

MRS. QUARTO.

(*Aside to him.*) An ugly name, isn't it? All the better—you may sooner change it. Make no ceremony with us; we'll wait any time any where. (*Aside to CHATHAM.*) You must see him. So, until your visitor be gone, we'll wait in this room.

MELON.

Not there; I have two clients closeted already. (*Aside to MIFFIN.*) Shark and a gentleman. This way. (*Aside to CHATHAM.*) That woman's invincible. I verily believe she has made a vow to marry me whether I will or not; and, what's worse, I'm afraid she'll keep her oath.
[*Exit, shewing CHATHAM and MRS. QUARTO into inner room.*]

MIFFIN.

Malmsey Shark! I would he was hooped in one of his own casks, and nobody but me to let in air upon him. (*Knock at door.*) That's old Spreadweasel. I don't know how it is, I never talk to him but I feel shabby for an hour afterwards. (*Opens door.*)

Enter SPREADWEASEL.

SPREADWEASEL.

Ha! humph! (*Walks about, narrowly surveying appointments of the room.*) These are Mr. Melon's chambers, eh? Law should be very profitable.

MIFFIN.

It is, sir, very—to those who sell it. Now, we've plenty of law on hand, and only want customers.

SPREADWEASEL.

Gay as a Chinese temple; too fine for business. Clients will only spoil your carpets.

MIFFIN.

Oh, sir! clients always pay for what they have; and quite as often for what they hav'n't!

SPREADWEASEL.

And the briefs, the briefs, do they drop in?

MIFFIN.

Our bag has been ready this fortnight, yet, 'tis very odd, they do not. We have every thing, sir, but causes. Such a gown—such a wig! The barber swears 'tis a lord chief justice in the bud.

SPREADWEASEL.

Fine chambers, fine books, fine wig, fine gown; but no briefs. Humph! Fine rods, fine hooks, fine lines, fine flies, but no fish!

MIFFIN.

(*Aside.*) I must make a little business here. Still, sir, our prospect of chamber practice is immense.

SPREADWEASEL.

Well, well, so you only catch 'em, it matters not whether you hook or tickle. Where is Melon now?

MIFFIN.

Consulting with a lady and—a gentleman. A very rich woman, sir. (*Aside.*) The only way to dazzle him is to

well gild 'em. They say the widow has half a million of money.

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside.*) Half a million and a widow! Even now, my dear Pamela needs the tenderness of a mother.

MIFFIN.

They're in that room; they can't be long.

SPREADWEASEL.

I can wait; besides, I'll look into the other apartments, the—(*going.*)

MIFFIN.

That room's occupied too. As I said, sir, chamber practice. In that room is Malmsey Shark and——

SPREADWEASEL.

Malmsey Shark!

MIFFIN.

(*Aside.*) What have I done?

SPREADWEASEL.

Malmsey Shark! Pray, sir, does your master drink his wine at a long or a short date?

MIFFIN.

At neither, sir; but invariably at sight. (*Aside.*) I must mend this.

SPREADWEASEL.

To know Malmsey Shark! A man whose every step through the day may be traced by a five-shilling stamp.

MIFFIN.

Ha, sir! if we were to follow folks' footsteps in that way, who knows where we should be led to? Mr. Shark is Mr. Melon's client.

SPREADWEASEL.

Oh! Then he doesn't take Shark's wine?

MIFFIN.

Certainly not; and if he did, as Shark takes his law, 'twould be hard to say who had the best of the bargain.

SPREADWEASEL.

His client? On what business?

MIFFIN.

There's now a gentleman with him: a man of immense landed property.

SPREADWEASEL.

Go on—I smell it; wants money—go on.

MIFFIN.

That's it, sir. Mr. Shark wants an opinion on the title-deeds—the—you know.

SPREADWEASEL.

To be sure. (*Aside.*) I know Shark's tight just now—can't do it all himself. Landed property! Nothing like a slice of the fat soil!

(*Re-enter* MELON. SPREADWEASEL runs to him.)

How d'ye do, Henry, how d'ye do? Promised I'd come and see your chambers. Glad the rooms are full. What age is the widow? How is the half million left? And the man of lands with Shark? Very rich, eh? Attach yourself to 'em—fix yourself upon the wealthy. In a word, take this for a golden rule through life,—never, never have a friend that's poorer than yourself.

MELON.

(*Aside.*) “True to this scoundrel maxim keepeth he.”

MIFFIN.

(*Aside.*) As I have given away money and lands, like the fairy in the story-books, I'll vanish. [*Exit.*]

SPREADWEASEL.

Should like a word with Shark. He's here with—with landed property: know all about it. And the widow,—is it a sure half million?

MELON.

(*Aside.*) Landed property! A sure half million!

What Mammon's dream is this? You wish to see Mr. Shark? The truth is, he came here merely——

SPREADWEASEL.

I know; your client. We're old friends: should like one word. (*Aside.*) Should like a slice of land.

MELON *brings* SHARK *from inner room.*

MELON.

(*Aside to SHARK.*) He insists on seeing you.

SPREADWEASEL.

Malmsey,—how d'ye do, Malmsey?

SHARK.

Ha! ha! friend Spreadweasel! I just called on Mr. Melon to——

SPREADWEASEL.

Very kind of you—encourage young beginners. There isn't a quicker eye for a flaw in the whole Temple. Lackaday, Harry! I'd forgot. Pamela's below, waiting in a coach. Ha! there's a wife you'll have! She wanted to walk—to walk all the way through the showers; but when we came to Cheapside, I would have a coach! Go to her, and bring her up. I promised she should see the chambers—go.

MELON.

I go, sir,—(*aside*)—to keep her where she is. [*Exit.*]

SPREADWEASEL.

Well, old friend, how rubs the world?

SHARK.

Ha! ha! dull, dull, dull. I do nothing. Ha! ha! I make no money—sell no wine.

SPREADWEASEL.

That is, you sell no money, and you make no wine.

SHARK.

Ha! ha! now anybody else would offend me, ha! ha!

SPREADWEASEL.

Tell me, is this estate extensive—will the mortgage be large? • Don't stare—Melon's told me all about it.

SHARK.

(*Aside.*) Some flam to account for my being here. The estate is enormous.

SPREADWEASEL.

And the spendthrift owner of this princedom—the—

(*SMOKE comes from room in scene.*)

Hush! here he comes.

SHARK.

Where? (*Aside, seeing SMOKE.*) Ha! ha! Captain Smoke a landowner!—with all my heart!

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside to SHARK.*) Pray—pray—pray introduce me.

SHARK.

Captain Smoke,—ha! ha!—Mr. Spreadweasel; a man, captain, whose pocket's a mine, and whose heart is a well.

SMOKE.

Happy, sir, to know so rich and deep a gentleman.

SPREADWEASEL.

Rich, sir, not I! But you know our friend—he's called the satirical Shark.

SMOKE.

Oh, yes! the verjuice Bacchus.

SHARK.

Ha! ha! now any body else would really offend me. Good day, captain; we'll talk of that matter by and bye. (*Aside.*) He mortgage lands! ha! ha! I could, if I would, show him some odd title-deeds. [*Exit.*]

SPREADWEASEL.

A good man, that; not so wealthy, perhaps, as the world

thinks;—who is? Ha, sir! the only safe wealth is that we tread upon. You gentlemen of solid—solid acres——

SMOKE.

(*Aside.*) What's this?

SPREADWEASEL.

Shark was observing that your estate in—I think he said in—Northamptonshire——

SMOKE.

Do you like Northamptonshire?

SPREADWEASEL.

My favourite county.

SMOKE.

That's curious; it is Northamptonshire. (*Aside.*) He had only to choose; he might have had Peru.

SPREADWEASEL.

Shark was observing that—I think the name of your estate is——

SMOKE.

Known in the county as the great Smoke property. In a word, I shall be happy to see you there. There are marks in your face—(*aside*)—£. s. d.—marks I admire. You shall see the property: hill, dale, wood, and stream; every nook of it you shall know quite as well as I do.

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside.*) There's no mistaking the air of a man born to wealth. Sir, this is condescension.

SMOKE.

Not at all; you shall be as welcome as myself.

(*Re-enter* MRS. QUARTO *and* CHATHAM BROWN.)

Ha! Mrs. Quarto! what brings the muses to the abode of law,—a case of trespass on Parnassus,—trespass or robbery?

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside.*) He knows the widow, too!

MRS. QUARTO.

Robbery! Oh, we of Parnassus defy law, and boldly pillage one another.

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside to SMOKE.*) Do—do introduce me!

SMOKE.

Suffer me to make known Mr. Spreadweasel, a man whose pocket is the Indies, and whose heart is the ocean.

MRS. QUARTO.

Well, how do you like him?

CHATHAM.

(*Aside to her.*) He her father? Impossible!

MRS. QUARTO.

(*Aside.*) Hush! Fortune, sir, is falsely painted blind; for surely, as with Mr. Spreadweasel, she gives the most only where the most's deserved.

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside.*) What a charming woman! How unlike my first wife!

MIFFIN *shews on* BROWN, *sen.* and LORD SKINDEEP.

BROWN.

I knew he was here! Mrs. Quarto, a thousand pardons for following you! I learnt from Guinea you were come here, and—oh, Chatham!—such a conspiracy!

SMOKE.

A conspiracy, my lord!

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside to SMOKE.*) A lord! Is that really a lord?—and do you know him? Oh! could you introduce me?

SMOKE.

With pleasure. Mr. Spreadweasel, my Lord Skindeep—Mr. Brown, father of the eloquent member for Muffborough.

(SKINDEEP and BROWN *coldly bow to SPREADWEASEL, and turn from him.*)

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside.*) I wish he'd said something about my pocket.

BROWN.

Yes, a plot: I discovered it only an hour ago.

SKINDEEP.

And would force me into the carriage, and in the hubbub, nearly committed murder.

MRS. QUARTO.

Murder, my lord!

SKINDEEP.

Knocked down an inoffensive passenger. I don't know what may be the consequence.

BROWN.

Nothing but his lordship's sensibility. The fact is, one of the horses started at a lawyer's bag.

SMOKF.

And a very sensible horse, too.

BROWN.

The lawyer started who carried it—slipt—fell—and got up again; while his lordship——

SKINDEEP.

Alarmed as I was, had still presence of mind to bid the coachman gallop on.

SMOKF.

I see the upshot—an action for damages.

SKINDEEP.

That was my fear. The horses plunged, and the people screamed! I, who have nerves of gossamer—indeed, with my feelings, I don't know what I do in this world at all—I, loving all the world, and therefore, hating litigation, I

thrust my fingers in my ears; and thinking the poor man killed, or at least maimed for life, roared, as I say, to the coachman to gallop on.

SMOKE.

And so, for a time, you escaped the police?

SKINDEEP.

Now, Smoke, don't distress me. The man is not killed; indeed, the man, Brown assures me, is not hurt. If he had been killed, I—I—yes, nothing on earth should ever have induced me to enter that vehicle again. No! no! if he had been killed, I'd have put down my carriage, sold off my horses, and for the rest of my natural life, I would have——

MRS. QUARTO.

Gone on foot, my lord?

SKINDEEP.

Hired a job.

BROWN.

But, my lord, this is a waste of feeling; the man is not hurt.

SKINDEEP.

Nevertheless, I have often intended it, and I won't sleep without doing it. I *will* subscribe to some hospital: I should have done it before, only for their number, and the equality of their merits; but to-day has determined me; I *will* make myself a life-governor, and then, whatever accident occurs—for Robert's a headstrong driver—I shall at least protect my feelings, and keep my conscience comfortable.

MRS. QUARTO.

But the cause of this speed—the origin of this homicide that might have been?

BROWN.

That, indeed, is the business. I tell you, Chatham, they intend to petition against your return. Why, you're not surprised?

CHATHAM.

Not at all, sir; I expected it.

BROWN.

Expected it! Do you hear that, my lord? Expected such ingratitude! Then what is human nature?

SKINDEEP.

Don't ask me. I know the people of Muffborough; philanthropy is thrown away upon 'em. And yet one can't help having a heart in one's bosom—one can't help loving the species. In the last time of scarcity, didn't I—with a foolish sympathy for human suffering—didn't I, at my own expense, illuminate the market clock? Yet how did they abuse me?

MRS. QUARTO.

I recollect some lines—(*aside*)—for I wrote 'em,—that appeared in the county paper. Yes; "*On the market clock, illuminated by our member*"—

"Lord Skindeep, when commercial woe
Our luckless town oppresses,
Illuminates our clock, and so
Doth lighten our distresses."

I believe, my lord, that's correct?

SKINDLEP.

I should be sorry, madam, for my nature, to remember a syllable of such ingratitude; but some memories, like worm-wood, only flourish upon bitterness.

BROWN.

Illuminate a clock! Didn't I give away at least twenty watches to twenty people, —and now, would you believe it, Chatham, the voters misrepresent your motives?

SMOKE.

The honourable member has his satisfaction in his own hands; let him misrepresent them.

BROWN.

Such uncharitable creatures! They'd make a great deal now about a poor ten guineas laid out upon a cottager's kitten.

SKINDEEP.

Yes; as if, when the other party fell in love with all the canary-birds of the borough, we were not to take a fancy to a few of the kittens. Do they think nobody but themselves has a heart for the dumb creation?

BROWN.

But the fellow at the bottom of this—the fellow who's collecting evidence—is one Hampden Griggs, a sturdy mischief-maker.

SPREADWEASEL.

What! Hampden Griggs, of Muffborough?

BROWN.

That—that is the incendiary..

SPREADWEASEL.

And he, to dare to meddle!—why, any day I can ruin him!

BROWN.

You can? Sir, I am most happy to make your acquaintance.

SPREADWEASEL.

If a beggar can be ruined.—And he to annoy excellent men!—He! why I can destroy him—wipe him out of the world.

SKINDEEP.

Now this is delightful! These are the sentiments of public spirit, that repay one for the ingratitude of one's species. I shall be glad, Mr. Deadweasel—

SPREADWEASEL.

Spread—Spreadweasel, my lord.

SKINDEEP.

To enlist you on the side of my friend and colleague, Mr. Chatham Brown. (*Aside to CHATHAM.*) Bamboozle him.

CHATHAM.

I shall be too proud, sir, to place myself in your hands.

SPREADWEASEL.

As for Hampden Griggs,—I say it, if he stirs, he's crushed.

SKINDEEP.

You must dine with me—you must.

BROWN.

Mr. Spreadweasel must dine with us.

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside.*) I am much obliged to Hampden Griggs, whoever he is. Why, my lord, the fact is, I have my daughter with me, and——

CHATHAM.

Your daughter!

SKINDEEP.

She shall dine with us, too.

CHATHAM.

Your daughter, sir—where, where is she?

SPREADWEASEL.

Why I sent her husband who is to be, to bring her here, and—here she is.

MELON leads on PAMELA SPREADWEASEL: *she is drest in the extreme of plainness, and her manner is bashful and rustic*

SKINDEEP.

(*Aside.*) What a lovely piece of still-life!

MRS. QUARTO.

(*Aside to CHATHAM.*) Well, isn't she?

CHATHAM.

No—yes—no! The same face—the same divine feature, and yet——

BROWN.

(*Aside to CHATHAM.*) That's right; you do this very well. Continue to be struck with the girl; 'twill flatter the father.

PAMELA.

(*Aside.*) 'Twas well I was half prepared for this. He's deliciously bewildered.

SKINDEEP.

Beautiful lady, may your father's friend—(*about to kiss her hand.*)

PAMELA.

Oh, sir! you mus'n't.

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside to her.*) Yes he may—he's a lord.

BROWN.

(*Aside to him.*) Chatham, don't you vote on the same side?

CHATHAM.

(*Taking her hand.*) Madam—(*aside.*)—her hand beats not, trembles not. Madam—(*about to kiss her hand.*)

PAMELA.

Oh, sir! but you mus'n't—

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside to her.*) Yes he may; he's a member of parliament.

SMOKE.

(*Aside.*) I must assert myself here. Angelic lady—(*about to take her hand.*)

PAMELA.

No, sir; indeed, no more. Isn't there my husband that is to be?

MELON.

(*Aside.*) Her husband! Can't she conceal my misery till the time comes?

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside to her.*) Prudent girl! and yet you might,—he's a great landed proprietor.

SKINDEEP.

(*Aside to BROWN.*) We'll have some sport with them. Miss Spreadweasel must go with us to dinner.

PAMELA.

Oh, my lord!

SKINDEEP.

Come, the carriage waits for us. Your hand—your beauteous hand. (*Kissing her hand.*) Ha! these are the things that make one love one's species.

CHATHAM.

(*Aside.*) His lordship is more than usually philanthropic! Have you not a hand for me, Miss Spreadweasel? (*Aside.*) Still, still her look perplexes, baffles me!

PAMELA.

(*Aside.*) His eyes, I feel it, devour my face; no matter, as yet it shall betray nothing. Come father: mind, I paid the coachman. He wanted two shillings, but I knew his fare was eighteen-pence.

SPREADWEASEL.

(*To LORD SKINDEEP.*) You see, my lord, quite a child of nature.

SKINDEEP.

Quite—(*aside*)—at sixpences. Mr. Spreadweasel, will you lead Mrs. Quarto?

SPREADWEASEL.

Madam, I—I—(*Aside.*) I have now half a million at the tip of my fingers.

MRS. QUARTO.

Captain Smoke, we shall not lose you, and——

SKINDEEP.

Oh, no! nor Mr. Spreadweasel's son-in-law that will be.

CHATHAM.

Certainly not. Harry, you'll join us?

MELON.

We'll follow in good time. (*Aside to SMOKE.*) Sir, a word.

LORD SKINDEEP and CHATHAM lead off PAMELA, SPREADWEASEL, following with MRS. QUARTO. MELON and SMOKE exeunt into inner chamber.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*An Apartment in the House of LORD SKINDEEP.*

Enter FLORENTIA and PAMELA.

FLORENTIA.

Never again will I call fortune an ill name. To bring you to this house! Delightful! And the wise member not to know you! Ha! ha!

PAMELA.

Nay, I'm sure he's puzzled. I verily believe he at times takes me for a sort of wax-work cousin to my real self.

FLORENTIA.

Ha, Pamela! The same madcap as ever. Whether at a school frolic or an election—whether the sport be breaking bounds or breaking hearts—

PAMELA.

Breaking hearts! Men's hearts! Do what you will the things won't break. I doubt if even they'll chip.

FLORENTIA.

And you'll tell me you don't love that grave senator, Chatham Brown? Neither do you love the young barrister, Mr. Melon?

PAMELA.

I hate him, my dear; and for the best of reasons—I was brought up to dote upon him. They'd settled about my wedding-ring, I believe, before I'd done with my coral. His father and mine thought the best way to couple their guineas was to couple us. As very children we seemed to understand our wedded destiny, for we never met that we didn't fight and scratch. Oh! I am sure of it; with all his civility he has a charming, substantial aversion for me.

FLORENTIA.

I think so,—(*aside*)—and I hope so too.

PAMELA.

Then I've made the man—poor innocent!—think me a miser; and so he'd shun marriage with me, as he'd shun famine.

FLORENTIA.

You have yet another unexpected hope—a rival.

PAMELA.

Delicious! Who is the lady?

FLORENTIA.

What think you of my aunt?

PAMELA.

Mrs. Quarto? Now I remember what pains she took to tell me that she consulted Melon professionally.

FLORENTIA.

Yes: she wants his advice in the disposal of all the property left by her late husband. I believe her.

PAMELA.

Ha! ha! And where did these halcyons first pair?

FLORENTIA.

Where halcyons mostly pair—on the sea-coast. Since then she has persecuted poor Mr. Melon, thinking, too, that I—that I, forsooth, have no eyes.

PAMELA.

And Mr. Melon, as I now perceive, being vehemently of a contrary opinion. Marry him, marry him, Florentia.

FLORENTIA.

My profound service to you! So I may wed, where you despise.

PAMELA.

Nay, had the man come in the ordinary course of human accidents, I might, perhaps, have loved him well enough; but to grow up with your appointed husband, to know the worst and the best that can befall you,—'tis to take from woman's life the sweets of hope. A legacy's very well, but

not at the hands of the parson. But now that I'm assured of Melon's aversion—assured of his love for you—nay, I'm certain 'tis so—farewell at once, my sober, simple seeming! Poor innocent! You shall see this very day how I'll bewilder him.

Enter GUINEA, with packet of letters.

GUINEA.

Here, madam; here are all his perjuries—every one.

FLORENTIA.

There, Pamela, behold the falsehoods of my future lord. Yes, my aunt has resolved it; and how can I, a poor dependent niece, refuse Sir Phenix Clearcake, knight and alderman? But, Guinea, once more, tell the story of your wrongs.

GUINEA.

With pleasure, ma'am. My father, who was a distinguished officer in the service of the sheriff, sent me to Brixton.

PAMELA.

What for?

GUINEA.

To be finished at Minerva House. That was five years ago; I was then sixteen.

FLORENTIA.

Five years! Guinea, the more I look at you, the more I'm convinced that some years are twice as long as others.

GUINEA.

I was then sixteen; an innocent thing, knowing nothing of life but the bread-and-butter side. There I met and corresponded with Major Loo. We made a pastry-cook's our twopenny-post, and what these cost in almond-cakes there's nobody knows. (*Giving letters to FLORENTIA.*)

FLORENTIA.

Why, these are directed—"Miss Clotilda Montmorency."

GUINEA.

I took the name from a book: our teacher—she was my friend—advised me; as she said my father and the major might sometime have met.

PAMELA.

And did your lover offer marriage?

GUINEA.

He talked of a chaise-and-four; which I thought was coming to it by natural degrees.

PAMELA.

But did he never talk of the church?

GUINEA.

He never got nearer than the chapel—Balaam chapel, that a friend of his was building; and as I'd had three quarters' music, he said he'd settle me, and make me organist for life—'twas so respectable.

FLORENTIA.

And now, Pamela, mark the wickedness of man. Guinea here—good creature!—sternly resolved on marriage, her guileful lover——

GUINEA.

Dropt the correspondence, leaving a little bill at the pastry-cook's, which for fear of governess I was obliged to pay.

PAMELA.

But what has this to do with Sir Phenix Clearcake?

GUINEA.

That, madam, is the blackest spot of the romance. Last Lord Mayor's-day, thinking of nothing, I was seeing the show. I thought I should have fainted; for there, among the skimmers, there was Major Loo!

FLORENTIA.

The major and the alderman being one and the same deceiver—being, in truth, my aunt-appointed spouse.

GUINEA.

I'd often seen him here, though he's never seen me. When I heard he was to marry my lady, this day I told her all. Luckily, I've kept his letters, and——

FLORENTIA.

Most luckily; for they shall do me good service, eh, Pamela? Do you spy no sport in them?

PAMELA.

A whole comedy: come, and I'll tell you the parts we'll play in it.

[*Exeunt* PAMELA and FLORENTIA.]

GUINEA.

I thought those letters would be worth money some day: I've kept copies, and whenever he's made lord mayor, won't I print 'em! [Exit.]

Enter LORD SKINDEEP and SPREADWEASEL.

SKINDEEP.

Mr. Spreadweasel, my heart has a knack of always bubbling to my mouth, and I say it—at length I've found the man I've hungered for through life. By the way, your's is an odd name—Spreadweasel!

SPREADWEASEL.

Shall I tell your lordship a secret? It isn't my name. The truth is, an early disgrace of my family—

SKINDEEP.

I see—a piece of mud upon the ermine. Was it treason, or—

SPREADWEASEL.

It was poverty, my lord; grim, hungry, hideous poverty. Ugh, poverty! As a boy, I vowed the warfare of a life against it.

SKINDEEP.

My own emotions to a spasm—go on.

SPREADWEASEL.

There were eight of us when I turned from home to fight the world. Then I swore I would be rich.

SKINDEEP.

And heaven has blessed your good intentions?

SPREADWEASEL.

I prospered from the first penny; and then fears came upon me, that as I throve, the needy ones I left at home would pluck, and pull, and be a fatal weight upon their rising brother.

SKINDEEP.

It happens so—I know it. What I myself have done for younger branches, will, perhaps, never be acknowledged.

SPREADWEASEL.

And so I gave it out that I had gone abroad, and shortly after that I was dead; and then—ha! ha!—then became I Spreadweasel—then I changed my name. And this, my lord, was prudence—nothing more.

SKINDEEP.

The sagacity of benevolence: for I know my own heart, and I'll be sworn you promised to yourself the sweet delight, when you were rich enough, to go back and scatter wealth about your early home.

SPREADWEASEL.

I did—I did.

SKINDEEP.

How delicious to one who loves his species, to return among the creatures of his blood, and, like a good genius risen from the grave, to bless their hearts with plenty and with joy!

SPREADWEASEL.

Don't—don't!

SKINDEEP.

To press a long-lost brother's hand—a sister's lip; to embrace a nephew here, and here a niece, and rain a shower of gold upon their hearths and heads!

SPREADWEASEL.

Delicious!

SKINDEEP.

But you hav'n't done it yet?

SPREADWEASEL.

No.

SKINDEEP.

No. But you will—you will—you will?

SPREADWEASEL.

Some day, I think I shall.

SKINDEEP.

My dear friend, repress this amiable agitation. Here comes Smoke.

SPREADWEASEL.

What I've said is secret.

SKINDEEP.

Treasured in the recesses of my soul: for well I know, how few like me can judge the motives of a heart like yours. The world! Ha! if my constitution would only have stood it, I had left the world years ago and turned hermit. (*SPREADWEASEL goes up stage.*)

Enter SMOKE.

SMOKE.

My lord, you cannot imagine the pressing need I have of a thousand pounds.

SKINDEEP.

Don't wrong my imagination. I can perfectly.

SMOKE.

I think old Plutus, there, will lend me the money.

SKINDEEP.

And won't you take it?

SMOKE.

Decidedly. You see, a sudden chance has turned, which will enable me in four-and-twenty hours to make one thousand six.

SKINDEEP.

Ha! You are fortune's child, captain.

SMOKE.

It's plain, then, the lady's ashamed of her son; for as

yet she's never owned me. However, I'm serious. One thousand I'll make six.

SKINDEEP.

In four-and-twenty hours? All I can say is, I wish you a day older.

SMOKE.

I knew the kindness of your heart; you'll assist me?

SKINDEEP.

Any thing I can do for my fellow-man; but for you, Smoke, heart and pocket, both are open to you. For your sake alone, I wish both were equally full.

SMOKE.

My lord, I wouldn't touch your pocket for the world; I reverence your heart; and all I want is, one half-minute's use of your right hand.

SKINDEEP.

(*Grasping his hand.*) You have it, Smoke,—you have it; and my best wishes with it.

SMOKE.

I knew you'd not refuse me. Here's the bill. (*Presenting it.*)

SKINDEEP.

(*Taking paper, looking at it, and, affecting a burst of emotion, returning it to SMOKE.*) You didn't mean it, but you've struck me to the soul.

SMOKE.

What's the matter? This emotion at the sight of a mere bill is—(*aside*)—just three months too soon. It's like weeping at an onion—in the seed.

SKINDEEP.

You have opened an old wound. My dear father, on his death bed,—ha! what a father he was!—my dear father said, "Barnaby, my dear Barnaby, never while you live refuse an honest man your hand; but, my beloved boy, be

sure of one thing; when you give your hand, oh! never, never have a pen in it. I know you didn't mean it, but you've called my father up before me. (*Turning to SPREADWEASEL.*) Will you walk into the library? Fond of books?

SPREADWEASEL.

Very fond. There's in the very air of a library something that's delicious.

SKINDEEP.

There is—there is. (*Aside.*) He means the Russia bindings. [*Exeunt SKINDEEP and SPREADWEASEL.*]

SMOKE.

He's a noble fellow, that Melon; and, I'm resolved upon it, shall not be swallowed by that crocodile wine-merchant. One thousand pounds: his lordship refuses. No matter; the money must be had, and so I'll follow Spreadweasel to the library, and talk to him about philosophy. It sha'n't be my fault if he don't need it. [*Exit.*]

Enter MELON and GUINEA.

MELON.

Fly, or we shall have that terrible widow spoiling all.

GUINEA.

First, sir, could you tell me what sort of a man the Emperor of Russia is? He has advertised for some money, and—I only ask for a friend—do you think he's safe?

MELON.

Unquestionably. You wouldn't doubt an emperor?

GUINEA.

Why, when emperors want money, they're very like common folks after all. And now, sir,—yes, I'm going directly—I want your legal opinion. (*Aside.*) As he seldom pays me for Miss Florentia's letters, I've a right to his law for nothing. This it is, sir: if a woman marries—I only ask for a friend—can't she settle every farthing of her money fast upon her own self?

MELON.

Certainly.

GUINEA.

She can? That gives great strength to the weaker sex.

MELON.

And yet, where a woman bestows her heart and hand——

GUINEA.

But women ar'n't all hearts and hands, pockets go for something. And she can scode all her mone on herself? That takes much risk from the holy state. (*Aside.*) Mr. Kimbo's getting tenderer and tenderer; if his shares continue to go up, I think I shall bless him. [*Exit.*]

MELON.

How, how to break off this miserable match, yet avoid the penalty? If Chatham would but run away with Pamela, marry her, and so save my fortune? But no; to make my misery complete, the wench is fond of me. I never thought to break a woman's heart, and yet—self-preservation is a powerful law—it must be done.

Enter FLORENTIA.

FLORENTIA.

At last, you're in this house. My aunt must now, indeed, be happy.

MELON.

Nay, Florentia, why this temper? If I endure your aunt's civility——

FLORENTIA.

Civility!

MELON.

Is it not my love for you that——

FLORENTIA.

Makes you play the hypocrite to an unsophisticated widow? 'Twas for me you walked and talked to her for hours upon the sands, whilst I was bid to pick up shells and star-fish, and sea-weed, my aunt had such a sudden love

for all marine productions. Many a time would I have changed condition with a mermaid.

MELON.

Once I thought you had.

FLORENTIA.

Sir !

MELON.

It was that delicious hour, when seated on the cliff, you poured your voice upon the breathless night.

FLORENTIA.

Oh !

MELON.

And though I was famous deep in love before, at every note I went still deeper down—deeper than where old Neptune sat, and all the syrens, envious prima donnas, wept with rage to listen to you.

FLORENTIA.

So deep as that? And pray when did you come up again? But, sir, these rhapsodies must end. I shall no longer be a—a *particeps criminis*, I believe you call it, to your duplicity towards my excellent aunt. This day—within an hour—I must receive my husband.

MELON.

Be it so. I think I have money enough for the ring and wedding fees, and then, come poverty, come and hallow a back-parlour !

FLORENTIA.

Poverty, sir !—No, sir ; no.

MELON.

She has a haggard face and evil eye ; and what is worse, a reputation that in this world makes her the very vilest company. Yet, if she bring you, Florentia, poverty herself shall learn the smiling of content, and though all the world shun us for our wicked guest, she shall sit at our hearth, nor hear from us a word to wound her.

FLORENTIA.

(*Aside.*) Now, wouldn't any woman love him? Our hearth, sir!—Know, when I named a husband, I spoke of Sir Phenix Clearcake.

MELON.

Ah, Florentia! I'm not to be frightened from such fruit by such a scarecrow. Have done with teasing; and like a good girl, plot with me to save ten thousand pounds. If Pamela, refusing me, wed first, my father's will gives me my money, with ten thousand more on old Spreadweasel's bond. If I refuse the lady, my fortune goes to swell her dower, and I am penniless. Now, are there no means of finding the girl a good husband?

FLORENTIA.

I can't tell: 'tis said, the creature every day becomes a greater scarcity. My aunt declares 'twill soon be an extinct species. Talking of my aunt, that lady, knowing the contract that holds you and Miss Spreadweasel, has, for reasons which she best can tell, already introduced a rival,—Mr. Chatham Brown.

MELON.

Yes; he has seen or dreamt of some goddess, and—poor fellow!—thinks 'tis she. Pamela, a goddess! I never knew one of her sex so serious a common-place.

FLORENTIA.

She's a delightful creature. I find we're early friends—schoolfellows; and when I think of all our school-girl vows of love and amity, I feel 'twould be very, very wicked to deprive her of you.

MELON.

I'll take the sin upon myself.

FLORENTIA.

Her fondness, too, for you is so intense—poor thing!—'twould kill her.

MELON.

You think so? (*Aside.*) Now, to turn this tide of early friendship. Then honour, manhood, mere humanity forbids it. And then she is so very delightful, you say? Didn't you say she was very delightful?

FLORENTIA.

I said—that is, I think I said—delightful.

MELON.

And I, dazzled, fascinated by some errant ray—some meteor of the fancy—have overlooked the priceless gem that——

FLORENTIA.

Excellent; your wit improves, sir. Give you a fitting theme, and——

MELON.

Ha, madam! the indissoluble tie of school-girl love! Isn't that a theme? Oh, from what a precipice, have you snatched me—snatched yourself!

FLORENTIA.

I!—I, sir!

MELON.

In what appalling colours have you shewn the falsehood of the act!

FLORENTIA.

I said, sir—I merely said——

MELON.

Beautifully, indeed, you said,—no blessing could light upon a union bought with a broken heart. Sorrow—as you said—would fill our days, remorse our nights; whilst—as you touchingly observed—our children;——

FLORENTIA.

I beg, sir, I—I—I merely passingly observed, that Miss Spreadweasel was a—a—rather a nice sort of person, and that—that you're a false, unfeeling man.

MELON.

(*Aside.*) School-girl vows of love! Nay, Florentia, there shall be no treason in our marriage. You and the poet shall still be right—at love's perjuries Jove shall still laugh.

FLORENTIA.

And you, I fear, still find him matter for his mirth.

MELON.

Never! by this——(*laughter without.*) What's that?

FLORENTIA.

Oh, nothing.

MELON.

Surely that wasn't Pamela?

FLORENTIA.

Why not? (*Laughter repeated.*)

MELON.

It is her voice;—and yet so sweet, so hearty! I never heard her laugh so joyously before.

FLORENTIA.

Perhaps not. (*Aside.*) I don't like this. If, now, she should really love him! But I'll watch them both.

Enter PAMELA, BROWN, and CHATHAM BROWN.

BROWN.

Charming Miss Spreadweasel! how fortunate that my son's principles——

PAMELA.

Principles! What are they? I vow—ha! Harry, dear, how d'ye do?

MELON.

(*Aside.*) What transformation's this.

PAMELA.

Don't stare, good folks: you know, he's to be my hus-

band; he was left me by his excellent father: wer'n't you, Harry?

BROWN.

An admirable legacy.

PAMELA.

It might have been worse; and then it's so kind of people before they're buried, to settle how the world shall go on when they have done with it.

Enter LORD SKINDEEP.

SKINDEEP.

(*Aside.*) Smoke has fastened upon my vulgar friend, and—ha! ladies, ladies! Ha! Miss Spreadweasel! (*Aside.*) She is effulgently handsome.

BROWN.

Oh, my lord, you know not what our cause owes to this lady! You admired my son's principles, didn't ye?

PAMELA.

To say the truth, of the two sets they best suited my complexion.

CHATHAM.

Your complexion, fair lady?

PAMELA.

Yes: your colours were yellow, the other party's blue; and, as it was the fashion to wear a ribbon of some sort, 'twas lucky that I found your principles the most becoming. I'm sure there were many who couldn't give a better reason for 'em.

MELON.

(*Aside to FLORENTIA.*) I'm confounded. Such sudden animation!

FLORENTIA.

Very sudden. (*Aside.*) How his eyes glisten as she talks!

CHATHAM.

Nay, I am sure you were instigated by a spirit the finest—

PAMELA.

And the strongest in the world,—the spirit of contradiction. I'll tell you how it was. There was a strange man, dropt from the moon—a man named Waller—bless me, my lord! do you know him?

SKINDEEP.

Waller—Waller! Never heard the name—never.

PAMELA.

He used to haunt Cowslip Lodge; such a monster! He stormed at the parrots—abused the macaws—and, more than all, found fault with my whist. This man was a blue.

CHATHAM.

Of course. Find fault with your whist! He could be nothing else.

PAMELA.

I had never thought of the election; and as I was only a guest I endured the monster as best I could. But when, adding outrage to outrage, he emptied his snuff-box in the face of the dear unoffending little monkey, on that instant, and for ever, I became a yellow.

SKINDEEP.

I shall think with gratitude upon monkies for the rest of my days.

PAMELA.

You ought; for you can't tell how much you owe 'em. Luckily, as the election drew near, the savage was laid up with the gout. Then I travelled over every step of his ground, and out of fifty of his votes—yes, out of fifty blues—he couldn't boast of ten that were fast colours.

SKINDEEP.

Never—never was cruelty to animals so magnificently avenged.

MELON.

And you, Pamela—you canvassed! (*Aside to FLORENTIA.*) 'Tis plain; I have been dreaming—fast asleep.

FLORENTIA.

No doubt. (*Aside.*) And I begin to tremble that you ever waked.

CHATHAM.

How—how shall we ever repay—(*Taking PAMELA's hand.*)

SKINDEEP.

Exactly; how shall we ever repay—(*Taking her other hand.*)

CHATHAM.

The gratitude of a life——

SKINDEEP.

The devotion of my whole existence——

CHATHAM.

I beg your pardon, my lord; but 'twas for me the lady canvassed.

SKINDEEP.

Unquestionably; but you and I, holding the same principles, must in this case feel precisely alike. Therefore, our thanks—my thanks——

PAMELA.

I don't ask them, the enjoyment of the fun was reward enough; for I never talked so much, in all my life—never was so drolly catechised. What will Mr. Brown promise? He'll promise every thing. What will he oppose? Any thing. What will he really do? Nothing.

BROWN.

(*Aside to SKINDEEP.*) She has a fine intuitive knowledge of things.

SKINDEEP.

Wonderful! I couldn't have answered better myself.

PAMELA.

At last I struck upon their sympathies. "Men of Muff-borough," said I, "are you to be intimidated?" And the men silently glanced at their wives, and there was no doubt

of the fact. "Men of Muffborough," said I, "are you husbands?" "We are," said two or three of the boldest, "and sorry for it." "Men of Muffborough, are you fathers, are you men? In a word, will you sell your voices?" I had touched the chord; there was a shout; and one honest creature answered, "That's business, my lady; what will you give us for 'em?"

ALL.

Ha! ha! ha!

SKINDEEP.

Yet how can I laugh?

BROWN.

And then you spoke of the—the liberty of the subject?

PAMELA.

I did, and with such triumphant effect, that a worthy green-grocer, for only five pounds ten, gave freedom to his jackdaw. Such sport! ha! ha! And then (to CHATHAM) your speeches from the Dolphin window!

BROWN.

And all made without effort—cost him nothing; positively, nothing.

PAMELA.

No! then how generous of the people to give him such showers of eggs and apples for 'em.

CHATHAM.

Apples! Nay, I protest, I saw no—

SKINDEEP.

No, you were too excited for the good of your country; but there were apples: I blush for those I represent to say it; apples, the growth of the neighbourhood. I have stood thrice for Muffborough, and should know the fruit anywhere. There were apples, and—eggs.

PAMELA.

Yes—you promised to improve the trade of the place, and this spring, they say, chickens will be worth any money.

BROWN.

But the magnificence of the charring! that was a sight. The triumphal car, and the milk-white horses, and the member himself, with his sword by his side, looking as—

PAMELA.

As if he were afraid to draw it! And the huzzas of the crowd—and the trumpets—and the member's cocked hat—and the banners—and the nosegays flung from first and second pairs—and the voters on horseback crushing the voters on foot—and the cheers of the incorruptible, and the smiles of the fair! Whilst fathers shew the patriot to their sons, and mothers bless the gentleman so affable and kind, who kissed their little girl, then left ten pounds to buy the dear a doll!

SKINDEEP.

Even gratitude has its inconvenience. One can't do these things, but foolish people will talk of 'em. (*Retires up stage with PAMELA and others.*)

MELON. (*Aside.*)

Wherefore has she thus cozened me?—wherefore disguised this buoyant, bounding mirth, in strait-laced homeliness?

FLORENTIA. (*Aside.*)

Now, I'm sure of it, he dwells upon each new-found excellence. What mischief brought her here to-day! (*Approaching MELON.*) Henry.

MELON.

Florentia!—(*Retires up stage with FLORENTIA.*)

SKINDEEP. (*Coming down.*)

Two minutes have decided it: Miss Spreadweasel becomes Lady Skindeep. Her family is vulgar; but to a man of enlarged feelings, who loves his species—and they say, she has twenty thousand pounds—there's no vulgarity but in the mind.

Enter SMOKE (from Library.)

SMOKE.

My dear lord,—do *you* want a thousand pounds?

SKINDEEP.

My dear Smoke, take this for an axiom; every man whoever he may be, always wants a thousand pounds.

SMOKE.

Hear a brief tale. Old Spreadweasel insists upon giving me landed property in ~~the~~ here he comes.

(Enter SPREADWEASEL.)

SPREADWEASEL.

Beautiful books! Some of them charmingly gilt, too.

SKINDEEP.

Ha! 'tis the inside—'tis the soul of the book, as of the man, friend Spreadweasel, 'tis that alone I regard.

SPREADWEASEL.

Certainly. Still, the covers are handsome.

SKINDEEP. (*Aside.*)

He is vulgar,—looks vulgar; but his looks may be mended. When I have made him my father, I shall shew my filial love and put him under a tailor.

Enter SLR VANT.

SLR VANT.

Sir Phenix Clearcake.—(*Exit.*)

FLORINTIA.

(*Aside to* PAMELA.) Here's the deceiver.

Enter SIR PHENIX CLEARCAKE.

SIR PHENIX.

My lord, I would fain venture a hope that I have not delayed the well-known hospitalities of this festive mansion, but though I have flown on the wings of Icarus,—I—

SKINDEEP.

If Florentia can forgive you, we must not complain.

SIR PHENIX.

Forgiveness is the beauty, the flower of her sex; a flower, first raised as it were, in Paradise, and now the distinguishing ornament of every lady of distinction.

SKINDEEP.

Sir Phenix,—my friend *Spreadweasel, of Mouse-trap Hall, Bow.

SIR PHENIX.

Mouse-trap Hall! Do I see the favoured resident of that truly English home,—known in the neighbourhood as the cottage of cordiality? It has two stories, with parlour bow-windows—is surrounded by railings of perennial green, and for the consolation of the serious, has a backward look upon the churchyard; a churchyard, that only needs another Hervey, for the world to weep over other Meditations. Hard and soft water on the premises.

SPREADWEASEL.

A perfect picture of my humble roof. Sir Phenix, (*bringing down Pamela*), suffer me to introduce my daughter. Pamela, my dear, this is—

PAMELA.

Major Loo!

SPREADWEASEL.

No; Sir Phenix Clearcake.

PAMELA.

Major Loo!

SKINDEEP.

Nay, Miss Spreadweasel, 'tis Sir Phenix: the accepted suitor of Florentia, your friend, and—

PAMELA.

What! Florentia! you another victim!

FLORENTIA.

Victim! Oh, tell me! what misery menaces my peace? Your heart—I see it—struggles with some secret grief. A victim—his victim!

SKINDEEP.

(To SIR PHENIX.) What is this? Are you, or were you ever Major Loo?

SIR PHENIX.

My dear lord, if nature has cast me in a military mould—if I have a look of the line,—if—I say if——

PAMELA.

Look, Florentia, look: see how conscience blushes in the major's cheek!

SIR PHENIX.

Not conscience, madam—not conscience: but the timidity of innocence.

SKINDEEP.

Innocence! There must be something in it if you cry innocence so soon. Tell all, sweet lady—tell all.

PAMELA.

The major there——

SIR PHENIX.

(*Aside.*) If I'm not loud, I'm lost. I—I at once repudiate the major. Though, madam, I may possibly resemble somebody on the Army List, I am not military but civic. Know, madam, I am an alderman—of the skinnners' company, madam—an alderman, and hold the scales of justice.

PAMELA.

The more your wickedness to give short weight. Clotilda Montmorency!

FLORENTIA.

Ha! I divine my wretchedness. I read it in the culprit's cowering eye—his ashy cheek—his purple lip.

SIR PHENIX.

(*Aside.*) It can't be true; but I'd give ten pounds to look in a glass.

SKINDEEP.

For a guiltless man, Sir Phenix, your innocence is of a timid, gentle sort.

SMOKE.

Yes, apparently so gentle, a lady may drive it.

SIR PHENIX.

The truth is, dear Florentia, this is a mistake—a——

PAMELA.

Florentia ! Clotilda ! A double friendship makes me doubly bold. Man,—do you know Brixton ?

SIR PHENIX.

No ! That is, yes ; by tradition.

PAMELA.

And know you not Minerva House ?

SKINDEEP.

And know you not Minerva House ?

FLORENTIA.

And know you not Minerva House ?

SIR PHENIX.

I—I think I do, yes : 'tis in a row of uniform mansions, the middle one greatly preponderating. There are grass-plots in front, with well stocked gardens behind. Omnibuses pass the door every five minutes.

PAMELA.

Attend, Florentia ; and you, my lord, whose heart beats only for your species, judge that naughty man. Clotilda Montmorency—alas, sweet girl !—little thought she when she listened to his tales of glory, that the major's only company was of the skimmers !

SPREADWEASEL.

Perhaps, Pamela, this history had better be deferred.

PAMELA.

Father, I have a vow to my early friend. My lord, fancy a lovely innocent creature, in the blush and bloom of artless sixteen. I say, fancy her.

SKINDEEP.

I *can* fancy her perfectly.

PAMELA.

With a soul of romance, caught by the honied words of middle-aged deceit ! Imagine that, Florentia !

FLORENTIA.

I do—I see it.

PAMELA.

My lord, Clotilda loved, and was deserted. She still was beautiful ; but the canker was in the rose—the lute was shattered—the dove was stricken—and Clotilda died.

SIR PHENIX.

(*Aside.*) Then I'm comfortable.

SKINDEEP.

And this monster——

PAMELA.

There he stands, stained with a broken heart !

FLORENTIA.

Oh, Pamela ! And this man was to have led me to the church !

PAMELA.

And if he had, the ghost of Clotilda—he knows she knew music—would have played the Dead March in the organ-loft.

SIR PHENIX.

(*Aside.*) As she's dead, there's no proof. I protest this is altogether a mistake. There's no proof that——

PAMELA.

Before she died, she placed the monster's letters in my hand. I vowed to carry them ever about me, and – (*producing them*)—here they are.

SKINDEEP.

His letters !

SIR PHENIX.

Not mine—not mine! And even if they were, they're follies of youth—wild oats—mere—ha! ha!—mere wild oats!

SKINDEEP.

Is this your reverence for human nature? Wild oats! Nightshade! Hemlock! Wild oats. Every letter here's a dagger to the trusting bosom of devoted woman.

FLORENTIA.

Oh, my lord!

SPREADWEASEL.

What lovely language!

SKINDEEP.

Every flourish a mortal serpent to a woman's heart. The whole alphabet is here no less than six-and-twenty black assassins, marshalled to stab a woman's peace!

SIR PHENIX.

The alphabet has, I know, much stabbing to answer for; but I never employed it in those letters.

PAMELA.

Read them, my lord.

SMOKE *and others.*

Read—read!

SIR PHENIX.

I protest against that, though I know nothing of 'em; but to read the letters of a gentleman—to go over the whole premises of his heart, without permission—I—do as you please—I'll not stay—I'll be no party to—— [Going.]

FLORENTIA.

Plain—plain! Conscience-stricken, he would fly exposure. My dear, dear friend, what do I owe you for my preservation! And Clotilda—she is dead! I'm very ill. Call my maid.

PAMELA.

Clotilda's dead. Nor is there monument or stone to mark the spot where lie her cold remains!

SKINDEEP.

No monument! Sir Phenix, this is worse than all. Broken hearts, with the best intentions, will happen; but to raise no stone to your victim's memory—to write no epitaph—I put it to you as a man, have you no love for your species?

SIR PHENIX.

As far as a small monument, or a tombstone goes, I'll give that, but——

SKINDEEP.

No man can do more; you've said enough. Erect a handsome tombstone, and so silence the world with the beauty of remorse.

SIR PHENIX.

But still I know nothing of the lady; and even if I did—suppose it was all true—I say, suppose it was—if a man's to be crushed by a few things of this sort, what's the use of his respectability? I ask again—what's the use of——

Enter GUINEA.

GUINEA.

(*Running to FLORENTIA.*) Oh! my lady ill!

GUINEA *looks significantly at SIR PHENIX, who recognises her.*

PAMELA.

No wonder, that she's ill. What she has heard would call tears from a stone.

SIR PHENIX.

(*Aside.*) It has done more than that: I think it has called the dead from the grave. The slut! Though 'tis ten years past I'll swear 'tis she. Will not sweet Florentia be comforted?

FLORENTIA.

Accost me not! Methinks I see the spectre of your victim at your side.

SIR PHENIX.

(*Aside.*) Methinks so, too. Perhaps, Miss Spread-weasel——

PAMELA.

Go, Sir Phenix, go: and if Balaam Chapel yet be built, pray there to be made better. Come, Florentia.

(FLORENTIA is led off by PAMELA and GUINEA: the latter continuing to eye SIR PHENIX.)

CHATHAM.

Oh, Sir Phenix!

[Exit.

MELON.

(To SIR PHENIX.) An alderman, too!

[Exit, following FLORENTIA.

SMOKE.

And of the Skinner's company—fie, fie!

[Exit.

BROWN.

Never mind; for all her pouts, she'll like you the better for it.

[Exit.

SKINDEEP.

How can any man, let him love his species as he may, be such a fool as to put his heart upon paper?

SPREADWEASEL.

I know, when I courted, I took lawyer's advice, and signed every letter to my love,—“your's without prejudice.”

[Exeunt SKINDEEP and SPREADWEASEL.

SIR PHENIX.

It is she—I'll swear 'tis——

(GUINEA runs in.)

GUINEA.

My mistress has left her salts, and——

SIR PHENIX.

(Brings GUINEA down.) Now, stare well in my face—I know you can; and give me your opinion.

GUINEA.

My opinion, Sir Phenix?

SIR PHENIX.

I am about to erect a little monument to a broken-hearted woman, and I wish to consult you on the epitaph. Don't you think this—it has just popped into my brain—this will tell the tale? Hem!

“Beneath this weeping willow's shade,
Here, reader, *lies* a lady's maid?”

Will that serve?

GUINEA.

Beautifully, with this addition:—

“All killed she was by Major Loo,
The only thing he ever slew!”

Ha! ha! ha!

SIR PHENIX.

Slut! baggage!

[GUINEA *runs off, laughing, followed by* SIR PHENIX.]

ACT IV.

SCENE.—LORD SKINDEEP'S *Library*.

Enter LORD SKINDEEP *and* SPREADWEASEL.

SPREADWEASEL, (*who is muddled with wine.*)

My lord, would you not have me rest quietly in my grave?

SKINDEEP.

Most certainly.

SPREADWEASEL.

Then I appeal to your humanity.

SKINDEEP.

Don't. Any body who does that makes an infant of me. I can refuse 'em nothing.

SPREADWEASEL.

Marry her; and save my child from a profligate.

SKINDEEP.

But Mr. Melon may amend—may recover himself.

SPREADWEASEL.

He can't. So I shall sleep in peace? You'll wed Pamela?

SKINDEEP.

To shew you what I'll do for my species—I—I'll marry your sweet child. You appeal to my humanity, and—ha! friend Spreadweasel, the human heart is a great mystery.

SPREADWEASEL.

So they say.

SKINDEEP.

It has chords—chords—chords. I never thought to marry; for in very early life, death cut my affections to the quick.

SPREADWEASEL.

Well, give 'em time, and they often grow the better for the cutting.

SKINDEEP.

That's a beautiful—a philosophical thought. I feel 'em shooting now.

SPREADWEASEL.

And so you'll marry Pamela?

SKINDEEP.

I can't say much; former years rush back—the grave opens—I—'tis over. (*Seizing his hand.*) Consider me your son.

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside.*) That I, who have sold shoestrings, should be father to a lord! But this spendthrift, Melon,—he must be tricked, cheated, gulled.

SKINDEEP.

Well, any thing I can do for my—that is—gulled? How—what?

SPREADWEASEL.

We must make him marry somebody first : thus he forfeits his fortune, I save my ten thousand pounds, and Pamela, your wife, gets all. So when we have put him in fetters, you and Pam may be bound in roses.

SKINDEEP.

Having deprived him of one wife, humanity counsels that we should find him another. (*Aside.*) Mrs. Quarto—I saw her at dinner—looked the whole marriage service at him. Leave the matter to me.

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside.*) And now to get his interest for the widow. My lord—my—my son ! I—I have something in my bosom.

SKINDEEP.

In your bosom ? Break the ice, then—out with it !

SPREADWEASEL.

Mrs. Quarto is, I believe, a relation, or——

SKINDEEP.

There is a sort of shadowy cousinship between us.

SPREADWEASEL.

Well, then, my lord, I——

Enter BROWN, followed by SMOKE, who lounges in.

BROWN.

My lord ! my lord ! A quarter to nine ! The house, my lord !

SKINDEEP.

I shall be quite in time to vote. Drumbleby isn't off his legs yet, I know ; and though he thinks he's dropping diamonds he always talks tapeworms. I beg your pardon for quitting you, but Mr. Spreadweasel and I——

BROWN.

And Chatham, too, on such a night—when he has promised me to speak—to waste his time with foolish girls !

SKINDEEP.

Well, tear Chatham from the ladies, and since my country calls me, I obey. (BROWN *hurries off*.) I'm distressed to leave you; but this it is to represent one's fellow creatures. My dear Spreadweasel, make my house your own. I'll say farewell to the ladies—(*aside*)—coax the girl to give me a meeting, and carry off my prize this very night. [*Exit*.

SPREADWEASEL.

Captain, his lordship must be very rich?

SMOKE.

Rich! His heart alone is worth a million.

SPREADWEASEL.

Yes, but sinking the heart——

SMOKE.

Sinking his heart, even then nobody knows his wealth. How now, why do you look at me and sigh? Why so sad?

SPREADWEASEL.

Well, I am sad, to think that you *will* cut down your timber.

SMOKE.

Oh, ha! in Northamptonshire? Yes; oak, elm, maple, all shall go. In fact, I'll cut every twig I have.

SPREADWEASEL.

Oh, consider; the trees that have shaded your grandfather—that you have climbed as a boy—that—that—but if you will sacrifice, don't go to Shark, come to me, I'll be your friend: as you've exposed that prodigal Melon, I'll—

Enter SKINDEEP and CHATHAM.

SKINDEEP.

Once more, farewell—we're off—inexorable duty—*amor patriæ* will have it so. (*Aside*.) Pamela consents to give me a meeting; so I'll set my colleague to watch the interests of the country, and then fly back to conquest.

CHATHAM.

Farewell, sir,—farewell. (*Aside.*) I'll see my excellent father safe in the gallery, my fellow member in his seat, and then back again to Pamela.

SKINDEEP.

Smoke, I charge you, amuse my dear friend here. (*Aside to SMOKE.*) He's muddled already; drench him, and let 'em put him to bed.

BROWN, *sen.* appears at the door.

BROWN.

My lord—my lord—Chatham, for shame! You'll not hear a word of this debate!

SKINDEEP.

All the better: for as we've made up our opinions on the question, nobody can say we're prejudiced by the arguments of either party. Farewell—farewell.

[*Excunt all but SPREADWEASEL and SMOKE.*]

SPREADWEASEL.

Now, they mayn't be in their quiet beds till four or five o'clock; and all for their country. Ha! such men make us deeply indebted.

SMOKE.

Such men do.

Enter CORKS.

CORKS.

(*To SMOKE.*) Mr. Malmsley Shark, sir: he apologises for the hour, but business of importance—

SMOKE.

Though he visits with the owl, he's welcome as the lark.

SPREADWEASEL.

Nothing could be luckier. We'll make him drink—he loves wine.

SMOKF.

If he's sure 'tis not his own.

SPREADWEASEL.

Learn all his dealings with Melon, and engage him to lock him up as he leaves the house. Then—for his lordship has a wife for him—when the screw is turned tighter than he can bear it, he'll come at our own terms into our trap—he'll marry—ha! ha!

SMOKE.

(*Aside.*) Now, isn't it a moral obligation on a man to cheat such a rascal? I acknowledge the force of the appeal, and will respond to it. An excellent plot! Come, sir—come. [*Exeunt.*]

CORKS.

I took the message from John that I might get to the shelves. (*Sits: takes MS. from his pocket.*) I think I've prettily flogged his lordship on his last night's speech. He'll not forget "Brutus the Elder" while he lives. Every word's a thistle. How I'll double down the paper for him at the place on Sunday! (*Taking bottle of wine out of his pocket, and placing it on table.*) I'll take my glass of burgundy here, for his lordship will not be home till four or five; and I like to write with my books about me. (*Rises; leaves MS. in chair, and approaches book shelves.*) Let me see, I'm sure I put "Junius" here. Lord Skindeep can't have removed it. I want the book just for a shake or so of pepper.

FLORENTIA and PAMELA run in, (FLORENTIA throws herself in chair in which is MS.)

FLORENTIA.

Oh, Pamela! what an escape! Here—here we can breathe—here we can—(*sees CORKS.*)—Well?

CORKS.

Did you call, madam?

FLORENTIA.

No. You hear? No.

CORKS.

(*Aside.*) They'll soon go; I'll watch 'em out, and come again. [*Exit.*]

PAMELA.

Ha! ha! Was ever any thing like the alderman's penitence?

FLORENTIA.

Don't name him, dear Pamela! What's to be the end of this?

PAMELA.

Nay, you know the sentence—matrimony.

FLORENTIA.

With Sir Phenix? No! I'll change my religion first, and die a nun.

PAMELA.

Die a nun! Don't talk in that wicked way, or something will happen to you. I have it. The surest way to prevent the alderman's becoming your husband is—

FLORENTIA.

Yes?

PAMELA.

To get somebody in his place.

FLORENTIA.

Oh! I have thought of that myself.

PAMELA.

Consider. Among your acquaintance is there no well-spoken, good-looking young man of an obliging disposition. I'm sure there must be hundreds.

FLORENTIA.

Yes; but you know when one's in a hurry, there's no finding what one seeks. Oh, Pamela! did you observe my aunt? How she sat with her eyes fixed on poor Mr. Melon? I'm sure I quite felt for him.

PAMELA.

Your compassion was evident enough. By the way, don't you think Melon himself would pay you the compliment of wedlock?

FLORENTIA.

La, Pamela ! Do you suppose I'd steal my friend's lover?

PAMELA.

I do, and more,—believe you'd exult in the felony. With women as with warriors, there's no robbery—all's conquest.

FLORENTIA.

And finally, you're resolved never to marry Melon?

PAMELA.

Never; though he were the last man left us who could walk without a crutch.

FLORENTIA.

You're a good creature, and I'll trust you. We've settled it all—he runs away with me.

PAMELA.

My service to your women's conscience. And how for his fortune? If he marry first, the man I wed obtains his wealth.

FLORENTIA.

For all that, he vows he'll snatch me from the alderman, and—bless his heart!—live in a back parlour.

PAMELA.

Melon must not lose his fortune. To prove to you my regard—to shew to the unbelieving world the sacrifice one woman will make for another. I'll—I'll marry first!

FLORENTIA.

(*Embracing her.*) Was there ever such a friend? Where, now, to find your husband?

PAMELA.

Oh, fortune's very good. I've one, and one to spare.

FLORENTIA.

Nay, I can guess one—the member, Mr. Chatham Brown.

PAMELA.

Muffborough—elysian spot!—has two members: in love and politics alike unanimous. Therefore, if to-night I should rashly start for the church——

FLORENTIA.

Depend upon't, I follow in the morning.

Enter MELON, (who feigns intoxication, speaking as he enters, and followed by SIR PHENIX.)

Go home in your chariot! Not were it an Indian king's, flaming with carbuncles.

FLORENTIA.

(*Aside.*) Melon! and so suddenly thus!

SIR PHENIX.

My dear Mr. Melon, have you no regard for respectability?

MELON.

I despise it: it has spoilt so many noble fellows.

PAMELA.

Why, Harry, what has brought you to this?

MELON.

Despair! I was left with nothing but the alderman and the bottle; who can blame me for the choice I've made? And now he wants me to go home.

SIR PHENIX.

I'll set you down in my carriage.

MELON.

Your carriage! There's no room in it—'tis full of fiends.

SIR PHENIX.

My carriage! A thing built, as the swan of Avon would

say, by fairy's coachmaker for—(*significantly to FLORENTIA*)
—for the queen of fairy. Fiends!

MELON.

Pride, arrogance, covetousness, hardness of heart—all
the tribe of imps—I've seen 'em leering out at the windows
—take a daily airing with you.

Enter SMOKE, followed by SPREADWEASEL.

SMOKE.

(*Aside to MELON.*) Keep very drunk; if you quit the
house, you're lost.

MELON.

Ha! my honoured father!

SPREADWEASEL.

Father—father to a wine-bottle!

MELON.

Then be proud of your son. Ha! sweet little Pam.—
my bride, by right of sheepskin!

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside to PAMELA.*) Isn't this horrible?

PAMELA.

Shocking. (*Aside to FLORENTIA.*) What can he mean?
He does but feign, I'm sure.

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside to PAMELA.*) He's so every night. What an
escape you'll have! not a sot's wife, but a lord's lady.
Now, Harry—my good Harry—go home.

MELON.

Home! such a dreadful night!

SIR PHENIX.

'Tis a lovely night; the very fellow to that on which the
'youthful Hero swam the Hellespont. The moon must

remind the traveller of Italy; the stars have the most *recherché* twinkle—whilst scented zephyrs——

MELON.

Agnes—agues are about to-night. Colds, catarrhs that way-lay honest diners-out, and make wives widows, babies fatherless, and break the plighted hearts of doating maidens. Now, as it's on my conscience to marry, I'll take care of myself, and sleep here.

SMOKE.

(*Aside to MELON.*) Be sure you hold to that.

Enter MALMSEY SHARK.

SHARK.

(*Aside to SPREADWEASEL.*) They're ready on the watch. Ha! ha! Only get him to leave the house, since you won't have him taken here.

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside to him.*) His lordship mightn't like it.

SHARK.

And then—ha! ha!—they pounce upon him. (*To MELON.*) Ha! ha! Mr. Melon; what's the news, sir?

*MELON.

Hav'n't you heard? Bacchus is dead.

SMOKE.

But that can't affect you, Shark; as wine-merchant you've always done without him.

SHARK.

Dead, eh? Ha! ha! Poor Bacchus! how did he die?

MELON.

Why, he turned money-lender, and made of glorious wine a rascal subterfuge to drive a scoundrel trade; with usury drugged the heart-delighting cup—and what before was nectar for the gods, became slow poison to the lip of man.

SHARK.

Ha! ha! Bacchus dead! I shouldn't wonder if the trade go into mourning. But how did he die?

MELON.

His own tigers—honest brutes—ashamed of their master's doings, tore him to pieces.

SHARK.

Ha! ha! (*Aside to SPREADWEASEL.*) My tigers in the street will tear somebody else. But Mr. Melon——

MELON.

Hence! thou canker of the vine!

SHARK.

If 'twere any body else now, I should really be offended. Mr. Melon, I go your way.

MELON.

And for that reason, I'll not travel the road until 'tis purified by the morning air!

SHARK.

(*Aside to SPREADWEASEL.*) Turn him into the street. Ha! ha! we'll find him a lodging. (*To MELON.*) Bacchus is dead, eh? Ha! ha! His debtors needn't rejoice—he has left executors. [*Exit.*]

PAMELA.

Now, Harry, like a good boy let Sir Phenix set you down. Go.

MELON.

Go! Oh, Cupid, was such a mouth made for such a word? Go! Then hospitality—maid of the desert—take me to your tent, and let me end my life on milk and dates.

FLORENTIA.

Mr. Melon, be advised—pray go.

MELON.

You too! You, with your loadstar eyes, cry go! Thus,

thus cries the magnet to the needle,—go; and thus it is obeyed. (*Is about to embrace her : SIR PHENIX interposes.*)

SIR PHENIX.

Mr. Melon—that lady, sir, is within a very close proximity to the altar—with me, sir, with me. I can pardon the exuberance of wine—but even wine, though of a very favorite vintage.—

MELON.

Sir, you're a man of spirit: I'll give you satisfaction directly.

SPREADWEASEL.

That's right—immediately; now, while your blood's warm. (*Aside.*) Any thing to get him into the street.

SIR PHENIX.

Satisfaction! (*Aside to SMOKE.*) You hear? he call's me out!

SMOKE.

Never mind: you're a magistrate—bind yourself over to keep the peace.

SIR PHENIX.

We shall meet, sir,—when you're cool. Then, sir, you shall find——

MELON.

What shall I find, sir?

SIR PHENIX.

That I'm open to an apology. [*Hurries off.*]

SMOKE.

(*Aside to SPREADWEASEL.*) Leave him to me—I'll cajole him. (*Aside to MELON.*) Feign to go; then throw yourself upon a couch, and resolutely fall asleep. Come, Melon, you'd better go—you alarm the ladies.

MELON.

That's enough. But will the ladies see me down stairs?

FLORENTIA and PAMELA.

Yes—yes: certainly.

MELON.

Will they curtsy me out of Paradise? Then good night, father-in-law, good night. May your bed be roses, and your bolster bank-notes.

MELON is taken off by SMOKE, PAMELA, and FLORENTIA.

SPREADWEASEL.

With such a bolster never mind the bed. He's gone; in a few minute she's caught, and I shall be father to a lord. That I, Jonas Waller, the pauper, should be father to a lord! What's here? Something to assist his lordship's studies. (*Helps himself to wine.*) And this mansion will be to me as my own! These books—these statues. Somehow I feel taller—bigger. What's this? (*Takes MS. left by CORKS.*) One of his lordship's speeches? (*Drinks and reads, gradually falling asleep.*) Excellent wine. "Mr. Editor,—When I consider"—it is very fine wine—"the—the British lion has been"—twenty years in bottle,—“like the air we breathe—have it not—we—we—die—die.” (*Falls asleep.*)

Enter CORKS, (cautiously.)

CORKS.

I've forgotten "Brutus the Elder." What! Old Spreadweasel reading? No—asleep! If his lordship sees it I'm undone. I don't mind serving my country, but I can't lose my place. (*CORKS is advancing towards SPREADWEASEL, as LORD SKINDEEP enters.*)

SKINDEEP.

Corks here!

CORKS.

Now—(*about to take paper from SPREADWEASEL*)—now for a light finger.

SKINDEEP.

Corks!

CORKS.

My lord!

SKINDEEP.

What do you here?

CORKS.

Mr. Spreadweasel, my lord—I—I set wine before him as he ordered, and I thought he might want something.

SKINDEEP.

Don't disturb him—he has read himself asleep.

CORKS.

(*Aside.*) Asleep, and over such a piece of writing!

SPREADWEASEL *lets paper fall*; CORKS *hastily picks it up*.

SKINDEEP.

Give it me: you hear? I'll preserve it till he wakes. (*Puts MS. in his pocket.*) Corks, attend to me: be quick and secret. Within ten minutes let the carriage with four horses—you hear, four horses—be at the corner of the street. Not a word that I am at home: not a syllable.

CORKS.

(*Aside.*) My only hope is, that somebody may pick his pocket. [*Exit.*]

SKINDEEP.

(*Approaching SPREADWEASEL.*) His senses are soddened—he's fast as his own iron chest. Humph! And this is the sordid lump that fortune fell in love with? What a wicked face he has! Marked and lined as with an usurer's pen. What blank, bare ugliness has sleep in a rogue's countenance! Here there's no heart—no love for human nature—no benevolence! By carrying off the girl I shall prevent inquiry into my means—all babble about jointure, and such impertinence. And she's caught—caught! Hark! true to her appointment—'tis she!

Enter PAMELA

PAMELA.

My lord! My father here!

SKINDEEP.

He sleeps the sweet and tranquil sleep of the virtuous and the good.

PAMELA.

He's sound, indeed.

SKINDEEP.

I was contemplating his noble—his benignant character, marked in his placid face. I am the prouder that he calls me friend—will call me son. His heart is set upon it.

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Asleep.*) I'm—I'm father to a lord.

SKINDEEP.

You hear : in sleep I bless even the good man's dreams !

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Asleep.*) Grandfather to lords !.

SKINDEEP.

And he blesses me—*us*—with sweetest blessings. Pamela, you hear his words ?

PAMELA.

It's the nightmare ; he's very subject to it. I'll wake him.

SKINDEEP.

Not for the world ! At this moment he may be circled with his children's children—a rosy, laughing band, plucking his skirts—climbing his knees ! Let us haste—let us fly, that the visions of a good man's sleep, in time may be a sweet reality.

PAMELA.

And have you torn yourself from parliament—given up the debate, and all for me ? What a sacrifice !

SKINDEEP.

Don't name it. My love—

PAMELA.

Love ! After all, I've known your lordship but a few hours : are you sure 'tis love ?

SKINDEEP.

Sure ! At this moment feel I not its pangs ? Here, sweet maiden, here ! If it be not love, what is it ?

PAMELA.

Perhaps it's the rheumatism. Did you ever feel it before?

SKINDEEP.

Never!

PAMELA.

What a slanderous world it is! People say you once loved your cousin, Mrs. Quarto. How know I that something of that love may not survive?

SKINDEEP.

Love Mrs. Quarto! Even if there had been a boyish passion, now 'twould be absurd. A man may be very fond of grapes, who sha'n't abide the fruit when dried into raisins.

PAMELA.

(*Aside.*) A pretty code of constancy!

SKINDEEP.

But when it hangs, as now I see it—the untouched bloom upon it—rich and full in promise of delight—then—then—(*about to embrace her.*)

PAMELA.

Even then, the grapes, to some folks, may be sour—sour.

SKINDEEP.

Pamela, would you see me die?

PAMELA.

Not by myself: so, if you're in any danger, I'll wake my father.

SKINDEEP.

(*Dropping on his knee.*) Wild and beautiful creature, see me at your feet. Here do I offer my fortune, my title—I say, my title—wealth—all!

PAMELA.

I don't know what to say.

SKINDEEP.

(*Aside.*) The surest way to hit a woman's heart is to take aim kneeling.

PAMELA.

To deceive poor Melon! If, now, I could only satisfy my bleeding conscience—

SKINDEEP.

I'll satisfy it. You are too young to know what conscience really is.

PAMELA.

If I should break his heart?

SKINDEEP.

I'll take all the damage on myself.

PAMELA.

Or if, dying, his spirit should haunt me!

SKINDEEP.

Ghosts never appear to two at a time, and I'll never quit you.

PAMELA.

Or if, worse than all, his mind should sink beneath the blow. Oh, my lord! what, as a lover of your species, what would you do?

SKINDEEP.

Every thing that humanity could dictate: get him the best advice, and hope for his recovery.

PAMELA.

My lover has at least this consolation, he could not be robbed with greater benevolence.

SKINDEEP.

True—true.

PAMELA.

And to cheat the simple, what is it since the world began, but the privilege of the wise?

SKINDEEP.

In this case, 'tis justice—justice to the beautiful and good. Let me snatch you from a prodigal——

PAMELA.

(*Aside.*) Where can Chatham linger?

SKINDEEP.

Let us fly with wings of doves——

PAMELA.

No; I'll not stir. Let go my hand, my lord, or I'll scream and wake papa.

SKINDEEP.

Why thus perverse, when all things are prepared?

PAMELA.

All, my lord?

SKINDEEP.

All: at this moment the carriage waits.

PAMELA.

And my companion?

SKINDEEP.

Who?

PAMELA.

Is she not ready?

SKINDEEP.

Oh! some female friend or—but what need of a third?

PAMELA.

What need? 'Tis well, in such a grave design, I have more foresight than your lordship.

SKINDEEP.

Foresight? What means my love?

PAMELA.

It means, that I must think for both. The truth is, I believe I have a friend.

SKINDEEP.

You have?

PAMELA *goes to door, and brings down* FLORENTIA.

PAMELA.

And here she is.

SKINDEEP.

Florentia!

FLORENTIA.

Lud! How you stare at one another? Well, who's to speak?

SKINDEEP.

Florentia, I have always said—that is, said it to myself,—what an excellent, good-tempered, prudent girl you were.

FLORENTIA.

I am sure, my lord, I've always felt particularly delighted with what you've said—to yourself.

SKINDEEP.

That's a girl, I've said, a girl—I—a—Pamela will tell you the rest.

PAMELA.

Must I speak? Then, my dear Florentia, his lordship has prevailed. I—I am about to become Lady Skindeep.

FLORENTIA.

Elope! run away together! Pamela—you do? You've taken away my breath; but in a minute I shall be able to scream and alarm the house.

SKINDEEP.

Is the girl mad?

PAMELA.

This your prudence—this your friendship?

FLORENTIA.

I will. What! deceive so good, so kind a gentleman as Mr. Melon? And you, my lord, at your age to marry a young and simple creature,—call you that love for your species?

PAMELA.

But, Florentia, my dear friend—

FLORENTIA.

Call me not friend, unless you break this wicked match ! Think you his lordship loves you?—not he ! 'Tis but for your fortune ; he'd love a mummy twice as much with twice the gold.

SKINDEEP.

I'm confounded. So young, and so uncharitable !

PAMELA.

(*Aside to SKINDEEP.*) Leave us together—I'll convince her. Though her reproof is just—my feelings tell me so.

SKINDEEP.

(*Aside to her.*) Don't believe your feelings : there are moments in life—and this is one—when they're not to be believed. I'll see that all's prepared : meanwhile, persuade her. She's an excellent creature, and will see the wrong her hasty passion's done me. (*Aside.*) The parroquet !
[*Exit.*]

PAMELA.

Ha ! ha ! ha !

FLORENTIA.

Ha ! ha ! And so that satin-tongued benevolence has made you consent to play the runaway ?

PAMELA.

I tell you, coach and all's ready.

FLORENTIA.

But having gone so far—how to recede ?

PAMELA.

Look there—my father. His lordship—I marked him—has for his own purpose been most hospitable. Now, I'll lead my lord almost to the very carriage-step—then rouse my papa—curtsey, and go home.

FLORENTIA.

But what a pity, since all is ready, that the horses should return to the stable ? If Mr. Chatham, now, would run away with you——

PAMELA.

You and Melon might keep me company. He promised to return; but it seems parliament has too attractive charms.

Enter CHATHAM BROWN.

FLORENTIA.

He's here. (*Runs up to him. Aside.*) Not a word, but listen. His lordship hopes to carry off Pamela this very night.

CHATHAM.

Lord Skindeep!

FLORENTIA.

Even he; but, resolved to save her, I have taken means to defeat him. At this moment, a carriage awaits the gallant knight who'll snatch my friend from selfishness and age.

CHATHAM.

A million—million thanks.

FLORENTIA.

But not a word that I have planned this——

CHATHAM.

Though such service be to me reproach, I bless it.

FLORENTIA.

Then plead and pray; and if in five minutes you win not a wife, despair and die a bachelor. (*Runs off.*)

CHATHAM.

Dear, dear Pamela, time that might admit of ceremony, now rejects such vain delay as treachery to love. You have confessed your confidence in my heart—in a passion that, since first our eyes encountered, has been the master feeling of my life, shaping every hope and painting life with hues and beauties it wore not until then. The step I urge is sudden; but 'tis the tyranny of circumstance that makes it so: admit that tyranny, and with a word turn it to blessings.

PAMELA.

I—what—you're so impetuous—what would you have me say?

CHATHAM.

Say! With that sweet, sunny look and cordial voice, say—there is my hand; take it.

PAMELA.

There is my hand, and—I won't say another word.

CHATHAM.

And is—is the treasure mine?

PAMELA.

You had best secure it, for there are suspicious people about. Lord Skindeep's in the house.

CHATHAM.

I have the carriage ready.

PAMELA (*Aside.*)

Another carriage!

CHATHAM.

Will seek Florentia, and instantly return. [*Exit.*

PAMELA.

'Tis done; and now, I know not how it is, all my good spirits are gone, and I feel as if I could cry heartily. There is my father; I didn't think twould cost me such a pang to deceive him.

Enter SKINDEEP.

SKINDEEP.

Has Florentia consented? Then what is to alarm my precious dove?

PAMELA.

The step I am about to take, my lord—

SKINDEEP.

Will lead to life-long happiness.

PAMELA.

I hope so. Nobody but must approve my choice.

SKINDEEP.

Sweet flatterer.

PAMELA.

So noble—so generous—so gentle.

SKINDEEP.

Cease—cease; or I shall expire with rapture.

SPREADWEASEL.

(Half-waking, and looking dreamily about him.) Somebody's talking.

PAMELA.

Yet, when the suitor becomes the husband——

SKINDEEP.

Your suitor will ever be the wedded lover. Come.

PAMELA.

My father! Let me first kiss his hand, and——

SKINDEEP.

By all means—but don't wake him.

PAMELA.

(She kneels to her father.) Dear father, may you forgive my disobedience, and bless me.

SKINDEEP.

(Aside.) As it's the last time, I'll kneel too. *(Kneels.)*—Bless her—bless us.

SPREADWEASEL.

(Aroused by them, lays his hand upon their heads.)—Bless ye both!

SKINDEEP.

Awake!

BROWN, *sen. runs on.*

BROWN.

My lord ! my lord ! this is abominable !

SKINDEEP.

Oh ! oh ! A chair—a chair—(*Falls upon a couch.*)

BROWN.

To quit the house on such a night !

SKINDEEP.

My dear friend, speak low ; for perhaps you speak to a dying man.

BROWN.

My lord ! dying ! (*Rings the bell.*)

SPREADWEASEL.

Bless me ! This is very sudden.

BROWN.

Were you ill before you left the house ?

SKINDEEP.

Or should I have come away ? dreadfully ill. I think—in fact, I'm sure,—an affection of the heart. You heard Sir William Dingdong's speech : before he had half finished, my head began to turn violently.

BROWN.

But your vote didn't ?

SKINDEEP.

No—no. Well, when he painted the dreadful famine in Crim Tartary, 'twas too much for my feelings.

BROWN.

What, when the famine was in Crim Tartary—so far off ?

SKINDEEP.

My dear Brown, that is the certain proof of an enlarged

benevolence: the farther a calamity is off the more I feel it.

BROWN.

But you'll return? If you're away, they'll not believe you're ill. That "Brutus the Elder" will be at you again; and his taunts sting like scorpions.

SKINDEEP.

Do they? I don't feel 'em. (*Aside to PAMELA.*) Steal to the carriage,—I'll give 'em the slip and join you. Yes, I'll return to the house, though I die in my seat.

BROWN.

You'll not die so—but if you should, what a thing for your monument!

Enter CHATHAM, followed by CORKS.

CHATHAM.

Now then for,—my father!

BROWN.

What! you left the house, too! when I came to seek his lordship, and was hastening back to hear you speak! What, sir, in the name of treason brings you here?

CHATHAM.

I—I'd forgot my notes, sir; I had made some very abstruse calculations, and I think I left them here. I'm sure I—

(*FLORENTIA and MELON appear at door, and beckon PAMELA, who cautiously joins them, and exit.*)

SKINDEEP.

Here they are. (*Giving him CORKS' MS. from his pocket. Aside.*) Any thing to get rid of him!

CORKS.

(*Aside.*) My paper! Oh, fortune!

SKINDEEP.

Now, fly—fly to your duty, Chatham; consider what 'tis that calls you, and—

CHATHAM.

I do, my lord, and haste to answer it.

[Exit, followed by CORKS.]

BROWN.

There—you're better now?

SPREADWEASEL.

You look better, my lord. You should fight against this weakness.

SKINDEEP.

It is weak—I confess it; but I can't help having a heart. I have said it again and again, I am not fit for this world—this vale of tears and misery. Often to myself do I exclaim with the poet—

“ Oh! for a lodge in some vast wilderness!
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where——”

(To SPREADWEASEL.) Where's your beautiful daughter?

Enter GUINEA.

SPREADWEASEL.

Ha! where is my daughter—where is Pamela?

GUINEA.

Gone away in a carriage-and-four, sir.

SKINDEEP. (*Jumping up from couch.*)

What! In my carriage, and—gone?

GUINEA.

Yes, sir: gone with Mr. Chatham Brown.

BROWN.

With Chatham!—What for?

GUINEA.

Why, sir, if you'll take a woman's guess—I think, to be married.

BROWN.

Married! I'll—I'll disinherit my son!

SPREADWEASEL.

Married ! I'll disown my daughter !

SKINDEEP.

Married ! I'll renounce my species ! (*Sinks on couch.*)

ACT V.

SCENE.—LORD SKINDEEP'S *Library*.*Enter MALMSEY SHARK and WALLER, shewn in by KIMBO.*

SHARK.

Mr. Spréadweasel not yet visible ? Ha ! ha ! such an early man, too.

KIMBO.

Yes, sir ; but like myself, perhaps he bears trouble better in bed ; and he was carried to his room quite in a fit of grief. (*Aside to SHARK.*) His daughter ran off last night with our young member.

SHARK.

Ha ! ha ! So I have heard.

KIMBO.

His lordship, too—he's very ill. I never knew him swear so at his species.

SHARK.

For Mr. Spreadweasel, I have news that may revive him—say as much. He's very ill, eh ?

KIMBO.

Altogether, the house is a hospital. (*Aside.*) I shall steal a lounge to the railway market to recover myself. [*Exit.*]

SHARK.

And now, Mr. Waller, as I've said, 'twas hard upon me to keep the poor thing ; very hard, indeed, to pay her funeral ; but my wife would have it so.

WALLER.

I accompany you hither that you may be rewarded. How long did the miserable creature burthen you?

SHARK.

Two years, and ill all the time; and when people are ill, they're dull and moping, and—ha! ha!—to a man of my spirits, not pleasant.

WALLER.

At length she died?

SHARK.

Yes—she relieved us all. And what did I get for lodging and handsomely burying her?—slander. They vowed she was a cousin of my own, or a—a something that was a flaw in the family.

WALLER.

Humph! Now I see the obloquy.

SHARK.

Then I was beginning the world, and a good name was worth double to me. Character's like money: when you've a great deal, you may risk some; for though you lose it, folks still believe you've plenty to spare.

WALLER.

And no one visited the dying woman—not even his lordship?

SHARK.

Lord Skindeep! He!—a lord! He visit!

WALLER.

Oh! under a humbler title; for his pride has stooped to such humility. Otherwise, since my return to England, I had not sought him in vain. I owe to an accident of yesterday my knowledge of his lordship's rank. A crowd, clamouring around a carriage, made me pause. A passenger had been struck down, but was found unhurt.

SHARK.

By his lordship's carriage?

WALLER.

Aye; and there was his lordship, loud and angry. 'Twas then I recognised an old acquaintance. And no one visited your dying tenant?

SHARK.

No one. The letters that the poor thing left are, as you see, signed Howard—Lawrence Howard. 'Twas her name; at least, so she said.

WALLER.

And the child—the boy left by this broken-hearted woman—he, you say, still exists?

SHARK.

Ha! ha! flourishes. My wife died when he was still a babe, so somehow he found his way to the workhouse.

WALLER.

And his lordship never crossed your threshold—never in your house, saw the boy's mother?

SHARK.

His lordship again! Why his lordship—why—eh? What! It can't be?

WALLER.

Indeed, it is. Lawrence Howard—I knew his lordship only under that name—is Lord Skindeep. 'Twas he who betrayed, and then at her worst need, deserted that noble gentle creature.

SHARK.

Lord Skindeep! Then—ha! ha! wonderful—ha! ha! —Captain Smoke's his son!

WALLER.

You are sure——

SHARK.

Oh! I have watched him through life.

WALLER.

'Twas kind.

SHARK.

Watched him without his knowing it. I've marked him, now news-boy—now copying-clerk to a small attorney—now agent for the sale of patent mouse-traps—now dealer in foreign stock,—and now, company-monger and—ha ! ha !—Madagascar captain.

WALLER.

I see his character. The bandit of society—the brigand of a city.

SHARK.

Why,—ha ! ha !—when children are left alone to make their bread of London dirt, we mus'n't judge 'em as if they were born to pine-apples.

WALLER.

You see him often ?

SHARK.

See him ? We're close friends.

WALLER.

Then he knows the history of his birth ?

SHARK.

Not a syllable. I have kept it—kept it with his mother's letters, to surprise him some time or other—(*aside*)—when I might make a good bargain of the commodity. But he has the deepest regard for me. Indeed—ha ! ha !—'twould almost seem he had an instinct that I'd dandled him when a babe, he's so respectful—so deferential—so—as I live—ha ! ha !—here he comes.

Enter SMOKE.

SMOKE.

(*Walking up to SHARK.*) Scoundrel !

SHARK.

Ha ! ha ! ha !

SMOKE.

Man-eater !

SHARK.

Ha! ha! ha!

SMOKE.

Wine-merchant, by authority, to Belzebub. Melon!

WALLER.

(*Aside to SHARK.*) His instinctive knowledge of your goodness is extraordinary.

SHARK.

Now, any body else—ha! ha!—would offend me. Before strangers, too, your jokes are a little too acid. Indeed, your great mistake through life has been not to have dipt your tongue in oil instead of vinegar.

SMOKE.

And your mistake to have dipt your heart in usurer's ink; and so dipt it that not the smallest vein's escaped the poison of the dye.

SHARK.

Vinegar again. Ha! ha!

SMOKE.

You merry ruffian! You never laugh but I think I hear the barking of Ceberus.

SHARK.

You think you hear? Some day you may come to a closer judgment on the matter. Ha! ha! ha! (*Aside to WALLER.*) Hush! As yet not a word. Ha! ha! ha!

[*Exit.*]

WALLER.

A blithe, light-hearted man, sir!

SMOKE.

Oh! jocund as a jackal. Heaven save you from his merriment! (*Going.*)

WALLER.

I wished to see Lord Skindeep. Probably you, sir, as one of his lordship's family——

SMOKE.

Indeed, sir, I am enriched with no such honour.

WALLER.

No! Are you not his son?

SMOKE.

His son!

WALLER.

'Tis six-and-twenty years since I last communed with his lordship, and—the likeness is most wonderful!—you seem to me in every feature what then he was. And he is not your father?

SMOKE.

Father! (*Aside.*) The word makes me sick at heart.

WALLER.

You are not his son?

SMOKE.

No, sir,—no. Will that reply suffice; or shall I send you my ancestral tree to satisfy you? An idle man—I'll answer for it—might find employment in it.

WALLER.

Is its root so old?

SMOKE.

None older: for of this, and this only, I am sure,—it struck in Paradise.

WALLER.

(*Aside.*) He has spirit—manhood.

SMOKE.

As for ancestry, truth to speak, I am one of those who may take the cuckoo for their crest, and for their motto—"Nothing."

WALLER.

(*Aside.*) My heart grows towards him. I—we are

interrupted—will you give me some few minutes of your time?

SMOKF.

Sir, they are your's. (*Aside.*)—And the gift is not less liberal, seeing 'tis all I have to give.

Enter PAMELA, FLORENTIA, and GUINEA.

GUINEA.

How delicious! Married!

PAMELA.

Hush! The girl will spoil all.

GUINEA.

To think that here you are just blushing from the parson! Well, marriage is certainly becoming; for you never looked more beautiful in all your days.

PAMELA.

Will you be silent? If my father—if his lordship—

GUINEA.

I'm dumb. But have you taken off your ring, and—you have? Well, I don't know—perhaps, I'm superstitious: but when one has such a deal of trouble to get it on, I should like to keep it there.

FLORENTIA.

Where is my aunt?

GUINEA.

In her chamber; ill, and will see nobody. When she heard of your going off with Mr. Melon, she took to her bed, and there's been such fainting—such hysterics! I wonder you didn't smell the hartshorn at the door.

PAMELA.

Come, Florentia; we have no time to lose. Quick, Guinea; quick.

[*Exeunt* PAMELA and FLORENTIA.]

GUINEA.

Married, this morning, and by licence! How lucky she was of age! A licence—ha! that's the way—the banns are low and dilatory—whilst a proctor's licence—oh! it's marriage made easy! Lud! his lordship.

Enter SKINDEEP, followed by BROWN, sen. GUINEA curtsies and runs off.

BROWN.

Consider, my lord, should Chatham lose his seat——

SKINDEEP.

Well?

BROWN.

Well! My lord, you're strangely lukewarm.

SKINDEEP.

Lukewarm! Mr. Brown, I'm a man, and not a steam-engine. I needn't boil before I stir.

BROWN.

But my feelings as a father—my feelings as——

SKINDEEP.

And my feelings as a host.

BROWN.

I'm as much astonished as you. But certainly, the girl has spirit; is beautiful, and very rich; so we must excuse Chatham.

SKINDEEP.

Rich! Gracious powers! And you'd palliate a robbery by the greatness of the spoil. Your son—my own colleague, too—has insulted me.

BROWN.

Insulted you?

SKINDEEP.

Desecrated my household gods. Miss Spreadweasel was in my charge—I thought the sanctity of my roof was about

her; your son, too, sat at my hearth, and reckless of her father—reckless of the feelings of his host,—stole her?

BROWN.

Stole! Nay, 'tis plain the girl was willing enough to go.

SKINDEEP.

That doubles the enormity. To take a cowardly advantage of a poor girl's ignorance! To whirl her off, ere reflection could warn her! To—had heaven made me a father, my son had acted very differently.

BROWN.

However, in this matter, you'll sink all private feeling, and——

SKINDEEP.

Sir, there are feelings that won't sink. (*Aside.*) And the feeling of losing twenty thousand pounds is one.

BROWN.

At all events, Spreadweasel must be propitiated. He says he can ruin Hampden Griggs, and—though you're angry with Chatham, he musn't lose his seat. Consider your party, my lord.

SKINDEEP.

Sir, humanity has no party: and I forget my colleague in the ingratitude of my guest.

BROWN.

(*Aside.*) Then I'll attack Spreadweasel myself; for at any price Griggs must be silenced. [*Exit.*]

SKINDEEP.

Twenty thousand pounds! Not a wink have I slept this night! And still before me have I seen the laughing mouth—the eyes swimming in triumphant mischief, of that jilt. She was very beautiful, and—twenty thousand pounds.

Enter SPREADWEASEL.

SPREADWEASEL.

Ha! ha! my lord! I know what you're thinking of.

SKINDEEP.

Twenty thousand—eh? Mr. Spreadweasel! (*Aside.*) The daughter gone, I care not how soon the father follows.

SPREADWEASEL.

I've news—delicious news of the runaways.

SKINDEEP.

Humph! under the benign aspect of a lump of wedding-cake?

SPREADWEASEL.

Would you think it? Pamela's come back.

SKINDEEP.

Oh! I never doubted the young lady's return.

SPREADWEASEL.

Indeed, she—poor thing! never ran away.

SKINDEEP.

What! I see it—dear creature!—basely, violently carried off!

SPREADWEASEL.

Listen. To my surprise, Melon, who had drunk too much to think of the penalty, was for running away with Florentia; she tempted my simple girl to bear her company. Well, on their way to the carriage, Melon was caught by Shark's officers, Shark has just now told me as much, and locked up for a thousand pounds.

SKINDEEP.

But Chatham Brown, how did he—

SPREADWEASEL.

He was returning to the house, when he was stopt by the squabble in the street. The girls were afraid or ashamed to come back, and he, in the handsomest manner, accompanied them to my dwelling—left them within an hour at Mousetrap Hall.

SKINDEEP.

And who tells you this?

SPREADWEASEL.

Pamela.

SKINDEEP.

Pamela ! and where is she ?

SPREADWEASEL.

Here—under this roof. Ha ! ha ! I knew you'd feel a delight to——

SKINDEEP.

A delight ! I don't exaggerate, when I say twenty thousand.

SPREADWEASEL.

Now Melon's fixed—now to strike a bargain with him : get him married, and Pamela's your own.

SKINDEEP.

Ha ! I've a thought worth a gold-mine. If he marry before Pamela, his fortune——

SPREADWEASEL.

I have said it—falls to Pamela's dower. If Pamela marry first, I forfeit to him ten thousand pounds.

SKINDEEP.

But where's your lovely child ?

SPREADWEASEL.

I'll fetch her, instantly—instantly. [Exit.

SKINDEEP.

Chatham run away with her ! I thought it impossible—I knew I couldn't be so gulled—so blind—so——

(Enter PAMELA.)

Ha ! thou lovely runaway.

PAMELA.

Oh, my lord ! How was it you missed the carriage ?

SKINDEEP.

Missed !

PAMELA.

There I sat in trembling suspense, awaiting you ; when, to my amazement, Florentia and Melon presented themselves, and——

SKINDEEP.

Your father, sweet one, has told me all. Melon was carried off, and——

PAMELA.

I begged of Mr. Brown to take me home. Naughty man ! How could you disappoint me ?

SKINDEEP.

All has happened for the best. Now, my loved one, you see the profligate you've escaped ; to be flying off with Florentia,—and she to wrong you. She who was your friend !

PAMELA.

Ha, my lord ! How is it that woman's friendship is so weak to woman ?

SKINDEEP.

As an observer of my species, I should say, because a greater feeling comes and swallows up the less. Does Florentia know that by marrying Melon before you marry, he is penniless ?

PAMELA.

No — else I'm sure, she'd never consent.

SKINDEEP.

Then she mus'n't know it. Let them marry.

PAMELA.

Poor things ! to be beggars.

SKINDEEP.

Oh, not beggars. Melon's fortune coming to us, we can be their bankers.

PAMELA.

I'd forgotten that.

SKINDEEP.

Then how beautiful the feeling! What an every day expansion of benevolence—what a growing of the human heart!—to provide for their wants——

PAMELA.

Out of their own money. What a delightful picture of humanity on our side, and gratitude on theirs.

Enter SPREADWEASEL.

SPREADWEASEL.

Well, what have you decided?

PAMELA.

Nothing: as yet we have only imagined a beautiful vision.

SKINDEEP.

A vision already realised—Listen. Pamela, you are married!

PAMELA.

My lord!

SKINDEEP.

Nay, 'tis certain; fast—fast married.

SPREADWEASEL.

What! Married!

PAMELA.

(*Aside.*) He's found it out. Has Guinea told him?

SKINDEEP.

Irrevocably bound in the holy ties of—ha! ha! ha!—why are you both turned to stone? How you stare! I mean, Pamela, you must consider yourself married—that is, you must write as such to Melon.

SPREADWEASEL.

Oh! is that all?

PAMELA.

Lud! my lord! I—I—you spoke so seriously that—

ha ! ha ! ha !—for a moment I hardly knew whether I was married or not !

SPREADWEASEL.

Go on, my lord—I guess the plot.

SKINDEEP.

Write to him that you are married. He'll believe you, but not your father or——

SPREADWEASEL.

Or his lordship.

SKINDEEP.

Knowing that you've a husband, he'll think his fortune safe, and instantly marry Florentia.

SPREADWEASEL.

Ha ! ha ! ha ! In the meantime, I'll instruct Shark to let Melon out on easy terms, and——

SKINDEEP.

Ha ! but for Shark's interference, Melon had carried off the girl, and all had been well. Now he's sad and sober, he may hesitate.

PAMELA.

Impossible, with the letter I'll send him ; and here comes Florentia, who shall bear the missive. But, father, you must not be here.

SPREADWEASEL.

I'm gone : but mind, my dear girl, a strong letter—ha ! ha !—an affectionate farewell for ever ; ha ! ha ! and then—(*Aside*,)—then am I father to a lord.—(*Retires, and subsequently goes off*.)

Enter FLORENTIA.

PAMELA.

(*Aside to SKINDEEP.*) She's here. (*Aside to FLORENTIA.*) All goes well. My dear friend, I have pleaded your suit with his lordship ; and—and—I can say no more : he has a heart.

SKINDEEP.

(*Aside.*) What does she mean? Yes,—I have a heart.

FLORENTIA.

I was sure that his lordship's benevolence—his charity towards human weakness——

PAMELA.

All this his lordship has beautifully shown; and the end is, he blesses you, and bids you be happy.

FLORENTIA.

Oh, my lord!

SKINDEEP.

Bless you, and be happy!

FLORENTIA.

The world may censure me for breaking with Sir Phenix, but

SKINDEEP.

The world! What we call the world, is but a place of dreams, inhabited by shadows. This—(*striking his heart*)—this is the world. Does this approve your conduct?

FLORENTIA.

It does—it does!

SKINDEEP.

Then you're right. That's the only world I've ever considered, and it never yet reproved me.

FLORENTIA.

And—I'd fain hope—Sir Phenix won't be very wretched.

SKINDEEP.

Make yourself comfortable about him: he hasn't the sensibility to be miserable. I sometimes envy such people—they're greatly privileged.

FLORENTIA.

Then—you—you think I'd better marry?

SKINDEEP.

I'm sure of it.

FLORENTIA.

And you, Pamela, can forgive my passion for one who was to have blessed you?

PAMELA.

Oh ! I can well afford such forgiveness, for I myself am blessed beyond all hope of blessing.

SKINDEEP.

(*Aside.*) Fascinating creature ! (*Aside to her.*) Make the poor thing happy outright—tell her all.

PAMELA.

And now, Florentia, will you bear a letter to your future helpmate ?

FLORENTIA.

A letter—from you ?

PAMELA.

Oh ! I'll not upbraid him, for why should I reprove him for taking another wife, when I—when I have chosen another husband ?

FLORENTIA.

A husband !

SKINDEEP.

She speaks a lovely truth—another husband.

FLORENTIA.

And you are married ?

SKINDEEP.

Blush not ; but with that rose-bud mouth, say—yes.

PAMELA.

Yes.

FLORENTIA.

Such duplicity is impossible.

SKINDEEP.

Florentia, I know the human heart; and in such matters no duplicity is impossible. Your friend is married! You behold a doating wife.

PAMELA.

Oh, my lord! Yet why should I blush to confess it? His lordship has said it. Melon never loved me; and now he is free. Go—go and be happy.

SKINDEEP.

Fortunately, Mrs. Quarto is very ill; that is—she is ill—so go and be happy. Stay, the letter. Now, sweet Pamela, write, write. Give him assurance of his liberty.

Enter SPREADWEASEL. He watches from the side.

PAMELA *sits at table to write.*

FLORENTIA.

By all means; under you own hand,

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside.*) She's making out his death-warrant. {

PAMELA.

Now to begin. (*Writes.*) “My own loved, dearest Henry.”

FLORENTIA and SKINDEEP.

What!

PAMELA.

Lud! See the effect of habit. I mean, “Sir.”

SKINDEEP.

No: too hot and too cold. Address him with a tepid politeness. “My dear Mr. Melon.”

PAMELA.

“My dear Mr. Melon.” Oh! my fingers shake, and—pray, my lord, give me words, for I hav’n’t a syllable of my own.

SKINDEEP.

Write thus :—"Feeling that the human heart has chords——"

PAMELA.

Chords with an *h*?

SKINDEEP.

Certainly : "and feeling that mine cannot respond to yours, I, as a lover of my species——"

FLORENTIA.

Does your lordship mean species or specie?

SKINDEEP.

"Species;" with the final *s* of course.

PAMELA.

(*Writing.*) "As a lover of my species"—with the *s*.

SKINDEEP.

"Herewith release you from your vows. That the release may prove effectual, I have married a husband whom I love dearly—dearly."

PAMELA.

(*Writing.*) "Dearly, dearly." Let me write "dearly" three times.

SKINDEEP.

Three thousand. Now fold it. Stop; humanity suggests a postscript. "If out of gaol by the time, I shall be happy to see you at our first party." (*Aside to PAMELA.*) It's so cool and straightforward, he must believe it.

PAMELA.

(*Unseen by SKINDEEP, enclosing a paper in letter.*) Oh! there's that within it—(*aside*)—my marriage certificate—he can't doubt. There, Florentia; take it, and with it a husband.

SKINDEEP.

And with it, once more, our blessing.

FLORENTIA.

Poor Sir Phenix ! if this step should make him miserable for life !

SKINDEEP.

Well, if it do make him moderately wretched, he'll deserve it. Since your story of the hapless Clotilda, my faith is shaken in the alderman. I believe Sir Phenix to be rather a profligate person ; and were it not for his respectability, I——

Enter SERVANT, showing in SIR PHENIX CLEARCAKE.

SERVANT.

Sir Phenix Clearcake.

SIR PHENIX.

Ladies, your devoted ; my lord, your servant. .

SKINDEEP.

Sir Phenix, you come, as you ever come, most opportunely.

SIR PHENIX.

I ventured to call, in the fervent hope that I might woo Florentia to the park. The air to-day is so delicious 'twould put Montpelier to the blush ; the sky asserts a peculiar claim to the term cerulean, and——

SKINDEEP.

Florentia has a letter of the utmost consequence to deliver to a friend of Miss Spreadweasel's.

SIR PHENIX.

Miss Spreadweasel's friend ? he is happy in that title—happy, though in Siberia.

SKINDEEP.

He's not so far, but perhaps not more comfortable. Do you know Newman-street ?

SIR PHENIX.

From here 'tis on the left of that great commercial artery,

Oxford-street. In that favoured *locale* is a mansion wholly dedicated to the hospitalities of the sheriff of Middlesex.

SKINDEEP.

Exactly.

SIR PHENIX.

It has three stories—with picturesque iron gratings at upper windows. In the interior, extreme luxury may be said to yield the palm to extreme security. As for household economy—sheet of paper, six-pence—pen-and-ink, a shilling.

SKINDEEP.

Before you drive in the Park, will you accompany Florentia to—to Newman-street?

FLORENTIA.

(*Aside to him.*) Oh, my lord! what would you do?

SIR PHENIX.

Will I? With inexhaustible pleasure.

SKINDEEP.

(*Aside to FLORENTIA.*) 'Tis the most humane way to get rid of him. The explanation must come; and Melon himself will then be on the spot, and is the best person to give it him. Then farewell; a pleasant drive.

SIR PHENIX.

A farewell—a short farewell.

PAMELA.

Florentia, be sure you deliver my letter.

FLORENTIA.

Oh, fear me not!—into the gentleman's own hand, be sure of it. Come, Sir Phenix, I fear me I'm a sad plague to you.

SIR PHENIX.

A delight—a rapture.

FLORENTIA.

But this is the last—the very last time I'll tease you.
Farewell. *[Exeunt SIR PHENIX and FLORENTIA.]*

SKINDEEP.

Ha! ha! ha!

SPREADWEASEL. *(Coming forward.)*

Ha! ha! ha! Caught—tricked! You are your father's own daughter; for you've cheated him beautifully.

SKINDEEP.

I'm thinking, when they're married, where they'll go to spend the honeymoon.

SPREADWEASEL.

Perhaps to Captain Smoke's estate in Northamptonshire.

SKINDEEP.

Captain Smoke's estate would be the fittest place for such a couple.

Enter BROWN, sen. with CHATHAM BROWN.

BROWN.

Now, sir—now, answer for yourself. Did you not return to this house last night?

CHATHAM.

As certainly as I again quitted it this morning.

BROWN.

And there, too, is Miss Spreadweasel, and—clopement, my lord!—what tale is all this?

SKINDEEP.

A jest, a harmless jest of mine—no more.

BROWN.

Is this a time to jest, when you know the petition is—now, Mr. Spreadweasel, this Hampden Griggs—he must be silenced—you say you can ruin him?

SPREADWEASEL.

Leave him to me: I say no more—leave him to me.
(Aside to SKINDEEP.) My lord—ha! ha!—would you think it? I owe all my present happiness to this Hampden Griggs; and yet—ha! ha!—’twas all a white lie of mine; I know him no more than Nebuchadnezzar—ha! ha!

(Enter MELON and FLORENTIA, followed by SIR PHENIX.)

Eh! Melon!

SIR PHENIX.

We were about to enter the vehicle, when the gentleman alighted at this hospitable door.

FLORENTIA.

Nevertheless, Pamcla, I have given him the letter.

MELON.

For the which I thank you, and congratulate you heartily.

SPREADWEASEL.

But who—who released you? Not Shark?

MELON.

Oh, no! a newer and nobler acquaintance; although it seems my need was not so great. For this paper not only gives me possession of my fortune; but—you recollect the bond, sir—ten thousand pounds. *(Gives SPREADWEASEL the paper.)*

SPREADWEASEL.

Paper! What! A—a marriage certificate!

SKINDEEP.

(Takes paper and reads it.) “Solemnized between Chatham Brown, bachelor, and Pamela Spreadweasel, spinster!”

BROWN.

Married! Then, my lord, you didn’t jest after all.

SKINDEEP.

Jest, sir! Truth’s a joke—honour’s a juggle—and sincerity a sound.

SPREADWEASEL.

Married ! But it can't be !—it mus'n't be ? Wench
—Pamela—speak !

PAMELA.

La, father ! you knew you told me to say I was married,
and could you think I'd wish to tell an untruth. Florentia
dear, I give you joy.

SIR PHENIX.

Allow me to respond to that hymeneal aspiration with——

MELON.

Nay, Sir Phenix, I must relieve you of that task.

FLORENTIA.

Quite true, Sir Phenix. I discovered that 'twas impos-
sible I could marry you.

SIR PHENIX.

Impossible !

FLORENTIA.

Yes: for I found that—that Clotilda was still alive.

SIR PHENIX.

My lord, you hear this—will not your humanity advise
me ? Rejected ! What shall I do ?—how exist—with my
heart shivered to atoms ?

SKINDEEP.

Do ! Pshaw ! live upon the pieces.

MELON.

But where's my friend—where's Captain Smoke ?

SPREADWEASEL.

Your friend ! was it the captain who released you ?

SKINDEEP.

(*Aside.*) Smoke ! (*To SPREADWEASEL aside.*) Have
you lent Smoke money ?

SPREADWEASEL.

A thousand pounds, I couldn't refuse—'twas such good security.

SKINDEEP.*

Not his own, then?

SPREADWEASEL.

Yes: has he not the great Smoke property? I thought your lordship's countenance was a guarantee.

SKINDEEP.

You'll never get a penny.

SPREADWEASEL.

What!

SKINDEEP.

You've lost your daughter—you've lost your money, and——

BROWN.

Now, Mr. Spreadweasel, as Chatham's your son-in-law—this Hampden Griggs——

SPREADWEASEL.

Curse Hampden Griggs! 'tis he has done it all.

CHATHAM.

Nay, father, spare your pains; I've done with parliament, and shall yield my seat to some one worthier of its duties.

PAMELA.

Quite true. He's married now, and must keep early hours.

Enter SMOKE, followed by SHARK.

SKINDEEP.

(*Going up to SMOKE.*) You—you have been in this conspiracy against me. Now, sir, look in my face and answer, are you not a worthless fellow?

SMOKE.

It is most true, sir.

SKINDEEP.

A scheming, plotting fellow ?

SMOKE.

Even so, sir.

SKINDEEP.

One of those—

SMOKE.

One of those luckless creatures—the waifs and strays of the world—to whom life has been hallowed by no tie ; to whom youth has been unthanked drudgery, and childhood at the best a blank. One of those who—never taught the creed of self-respect—just value men as gamesters value dice, mere instruments to juggle with and win.

SKINDEEP.

The trickster's apology, to whom the dignity of life——

SMOKE.

The dignity of life ! Fine words, easily uttered, but hard to estimate by those who know life only by its meanness and its wants.

SKINDEEP.

Well, sir, you have owned yourself a schemer—a gambler with the feelings and interests of your fellow-creatures. What more ?

SMOKE.

Something in extenuation. (*Gives him packet of letters.*)

SKINDEEP.

What are these ?

SIR PHENIX.

(*Aside.*) Letters for his lordship, too. He's on a sudden very white. Can he have a Clotilda, also ?

SMOKE.

They were written to my mother.

SKINDEEP.

Your—your mother !

SMOKE.

Betrayed—neglected—left with her child to want—she died.

SIR PHENIX.

(*Aside to SKINDEEP.*) Neglected! Doubtless buried without the humanity of a tombstone.

SKINDEEP.

(*Aside.*) They *are* my letters. Poor Kate! What devil is it makes men write their follies down, to rise against them when the living themselves are dead?

SIR PHENIX.

(*Aside.*) His lordship has sown what he, too, thought wild oats, but they've come up thistles.

SKINDEEP.

You Katherine Waller's son?

SPREADWEASEL.

Katherine Waller!

SHARK.

Quite true, my lord—she died my tenant. I've dodged the captain from the cradle upwards, and can bring twenty to swear to him.

SKINDEEP.

(*Aside.*) He's handsome—clever—all the world, too, must know the story—I—nature's wonderful!—I feel a sudden gush of affection—a torrent of parental love—a—(*throwing himself into SMOKE's arms*)—my son—my son!

All except SMOKE—Enter WALLER at back.

Son!

SKINDEEP.

My darling boy! Whom I have sought for years and years! Who has been to me a day-dream—whose vision at night, whose—whose—but I can't speak—I—you can imagine my feelings—for the human heart has chords—chords—

SPREADWEASEL.

But, my lord, you spoke of one Katherine Waller——

WALLER. (*Coming down.*)

Katherine Waller, your youngest sister.

SKINDEEP.

Arthur! you here?

WALLER.

Fear not. You have acknowledged your son; and my resentment's buried in my sister's grave.

SPREADWEASEL.

Sister! And you—you are little Arthur? My brother!

WALLER.

One of those whom poverty made hateful to you. I have travelled, toiled, and prospered. For some time I have known your sordid history. When you shall again assume your father's name, and with it somewhat of his plain dealing, your good, glad-hearted daughter here shall join our hands, and we'll again be brothers.

SPREADWEASEL.

(*Aside.*) And he's come back rich! Nephew—I give you joy—I give you my blessing—I give you—I give you your bill!

MELON.

Nay, for that amount I am your debtor. Still, be generous to your nephew, and think the bond I might exact, is paid.

SKINDEEP.

This is delightful! All are recompensed—all,——

CHATHAM.

Your pardon, my lord; there is still one person in your house, not yet rewarded. Suffer me to introduce him.—(*Brings down CORKS, who from time to time has been watching at back.*)—Brutus the Elder!

SKINDEEP.

What !

CHATHAM.

His anxiety to obtain the paper you placed in my hands whetted my curiosity. In your own butler, I found your weekly censor. (*Giving paper to SKINDEEP.*) You know the hand?

SKINDEEP.

It is so? And I have warmed a serpent in my own wine-cellar ! Here, Kimbo, kick out Brutus the Elder.—(*CORKS runs off.*)

PAMELA.

(*Taking paper from SKINDEEP.*) But what can he have said of your lordship?

FLORENTIA.

Yes, what can the wicked creature have said ?

PAMELA.

Hear the last paragraph. (*Reads.*) “When the race of Skindeeps shall practice all they talk, then will they become a social treasure—the very jewels of their kind. But when their goodness is a sound, and their benevolence mere breath, what are they but—but”—(*Forces the paper upon SKINDEEP.*)

SKINDEEP.

Humph ! (*Reads*) “Bubbles of a day ?”

CURTAIN.

